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ABSTRACT

The 17 articles in this journal issue focus on writing and writing instruction. The articles discuss the following: (1) the NorthEast Texas, Texas Hill Country, and University of Arizona writing projects; (2) the necessity of dealing with truth in the writing class, not as a concept to be defined, but as an act that creates and recreates relationships between people; (3) using the "I-Search" process developed by Ken Macrorie as an alternative to the research paper; (4) teaching the research process through the use of minipapers; (5) writing as communication; (6) the use of "workshopping" (peer critiques) to teach composition; (7) teaching composition to Chicano students; (8) a sequence of writing exercises designed to introduce what the writing instructor wants the students to emphasize in their work; (9) a "speak-write" rehearsal technique for use with basic writing students; (10) the advantages of teaching the techniques of writing before allowing students to write; and (11) the "role of the period" in the composition process. (FL)

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English in Texas

Volume 12, Number 3 Spring 1981

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

B.P. and A.P.: Before and After the NorthEast Texas Writing Project

Teaching English was much easier before the writing project. Then there were only teachers and texts. Now you know about too many things to ever be satisfied with the way you taught before.

Now that you know writing is a process, not just a product, you can't just say, "Write a 500-word theme for tomorrow, in ink." Now you pre-write, then write, then use groups to respond to writing, then rewrite, and postwrite (publish what they've written).

Actually it's no longer "they" — it's "we." Now you write *with* your students. That means you find out whether your assignment was any good — which means you have to plan your assignment carefully. If you don't, you may find yourself muttering over a blank piece of paper, "why did I ever assign *this*?"

It means *you* have to write. It means you take a risk, because you're writing and reading your work to them. What if they find out what you think about something? What if they find out that even teachers have trouble writing sometimes?

It means you let students write and write and write. After all, even a gifted piano student learns to play by playing and playing and playing. All the knowledge of parts of the piano and strings won't help him or her play better — only understand how the instrument helps him produce music. And all the knowledge of the parts of speech and diagrams won't help to write better — only understand how the tools help to produce writing.

It means giving up those straight rows of quiet, empty faces for active, talking groups of three's and four's (I hope you have an understanding, encouraging principal) and letting students learn from each other. It means giving up your royal desk and speaker's stand to let your subjects teach each other.

It means tying your red pen behind your back and biting your tongue to ignore errors — for the moment — and concentrate on getting words and ideas down on paper. They'll catch most of the errors in editing groups. And if they don't, well, you'll have your chance to correct them.

Now you can't be satisfied with the product from your command "Write." What students turn in usually are first loops of free writing. Now you let them write second or third or fourth or even fifth loops, then polish their ideas for a final copy.

No more instant essays — you let them think by writing. Let them learn what they think by writing. Let them learn what they know by writing. Let them write just to write.

Let students experiment and take risks with words. If they fail — at least they tried. If they're not punished for trying, they'll try again, and maybe next time they'll succeed.

Sharon Feaster
Education Service Center
Region VII, Kilgore

Poetry: "The Simple Desultory Rhetoric," Jim Zinn and Toni Greenwaldt; "The Other Side of the Desk," Carolyn Cartwright; "Them Prose Writers," Marvin Lee and Jan Dickson; "Them School Teachers," Buzz Session, NorthEast Texas Writing Project; "Rites," Jim Zinn.

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Glenn Irvin, Guest Editor
East Texas State University

The NorthEast Texas Writing Project: Help for Composition Teachers

"Students can't write anymore." "Kids graduating from high school today can't write well enough to fill out job applications." "Doesn't anyone teach writing?" For English teachers, such complaints have become commonplace, unfortunately with some justification. Considerable evidence shows that many students do not write as well as they should, or even as well as their counterparts of fifteen years ago.

Our situation in Texas is particularly grim. In May 1978 the Texas Assessment Project (TAP) administered a writing test to approximately 36,000 students, using a format developed by the National Assessment for Educational Progress. The results were not encouraging: National Assessment had determined earlier that many students across the country do not write effectively, but on several writing tasks, Texas students performed lower than their peers nationwide. For example: 14% of the nation's nine-year-olds were judged able to compose an effective letter requesting a kite, but only 10% of Texas students satisfied this criteria. Thirty-one percent of the country's thirteen-year-olds wrote an effective letter to the principal describing a school problem and proposing a solution to it; only 17% of Texas students did as well. Eighteen percent of America's seventeen-year-olds were able to write a satisfactory letter of application for a job; only 8% of Texas students completed this adequately.

Texas students also performed less well than students across the nation in paragraph construction, well-formed sentences, and general fluency and excellence in writing. Nearly 75% of the paragraphs written by Texas nine-year-olds were inadequate; across the United States, 50% fell into this category. Texas students used shorter words, shorter sentences and paragraphs, and a higher percentage of simple sentences than their counterparts at all three age levels.

One year later, the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS) provided further evidence that our students need more and better instruction in composition. The state's fifth graders performed adequately on both the objective and written portions of the test (although only 68% mastered correct English usage and 63% mastered punctuation). However, the ninth graders did not do as well, with only 59% demonstrating mastery on the exit-level writing test.

> "In five weeks this workshop has provided more fresh ideas and help with specific problems than have all other sources I have pursued over a six-year teaching experience." - High School Teacher.

Predictably, English and language arts teachers are being criticized for failing in their responsibility to teach students to write, just as they have been attacked for their inability to halt the steady decline of verbal scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test over the past fourteen years. In response to the results of the TAP, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has listed composition among its priorities, and all around one hears the usual rumblings of "more grammar," or "more spelling drills," or "more themes," offered as cures for the epidemic of poor writing that infects our students. English teachers, in many cases themselves confused about the causes and remedies, have found few nostrums in their professional training, support agencies, or teaching materials that they can administer with therapeutic effect. Beyond the TEA's efforts, which will require some time to implement, and the other vague and somewhat misguided specifics, what resources for reversing the trend does the classroom teacher have available?

A group of Texas educators has addressed this problem by establishing the NorthEast Texas Writing Project. The NET is one of sixty-seven such projects involving eighty-one campuses in thirty-one states, all modeled on the highly successful Bay Area Writing Project in operation for the past six years at the University of California, Berkeley.

Like other projects around the country, the NET conforms to the basic assumption of the Bay Area Writing Project:

(1) *The problem of teaching writing today is pervasive. It has affected all levels of instruction from kindergarten through college, and it has permeated all schools: suburban and urban, private and public.* This news is not really new. In recent years the public and professional media have reported regularly on the schools' failure to teach writing. Colleges complain that entering freshmen can't write well enough to be admitted to their standard Freshman English courses; businesses protest that prospective employees can't compose letters and reports; National Assessment determined that seventeen-year-olds in 1974 wrote essays characterized by "increases in awkwardness, run-on sentences, and incoherent paragraphs" over those written by students in 1969. As already noted, the results of the TAP point up with disconcerting poignancy that our situation is even more grave than many others.

(2) Since the writing problem exists at all levels and in all types of schools, the NET assumes *we can best address the issue through cooperatively funded*

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efforts. The NET began when East Texas State University contacted the Education Service Centers for Region 7 in Kilgore and Region 10 in Richardson with the idea of establishing a writing project for teachers in northeast Texas. Both centers agreed to provide administrative and financial support, and their contributions were matched with a seed grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities through the Bay Area Writing Project. Independent school districts in the two regions eagerly expressed their interest and willingness to join the project — in the best spirit of cooperative effort, no one level attempted to place the blame for the current situation on any other level; everyone agreed to share equally in the responsibility for improving instruction in composition.

"I really believe I can teach writing much more effectively now and enjoy it much more."- 4th Grade Teacher

We often hear that we don't know how people write and therefore can't teach them how, but that's at best a half-truth. (3) ***We already know much about teaching composition through research and the experience of successful teachers.*** Recent studies, like those of Janet Emig and of James Britton's group, have thrown much light on the composing process. A more troublesome problem is that (4) ***most writing teachers are not aware of this knowledge.*** For many years English teachers have graduated from colleges with relatively thorough training in literary studies, only to enter the classroom and find themselves confronted with teaching large numbers of students to write, a task for which they were never prepared. Faced with this, they turn naturally to the standard and traditional grammar and composition books or whatever other help they can find to get enough material to fill the school year. For most, learning to teach writing becomes a catch-as-catch-can operation, often incorporating several approaches indiscriminately and without a substantial foundation of research and theory to make the material and teaching comprehensible.

At the same time, the growing body of research has made available many useful tools: sentence combining, for instance, and Christensen's rhetoric, Moffett's designs for curriculum sequence, techniques for evaluation, and methods for motivating reluctant writers. Yet most teachers are unacquainted with current research in composition because of their inadequate college training and because the demands of their jobs make it difficult to keep up with new developments.

Despite the handicaps, however, some people do become successful writing teachers, and the NET believes (5) ***they can be identified, brought together to share what they know, and trained as an effective corps of Teacher/Consultants to help school districts and individual instructors improve the teaching of writing.*** The seventy-five fellows in the three summer institutes (twenty in Tyler and fifty-five in Garland) were carefully screened and selected from a much larger group of applicants who had been recommended to the NET as outstanding composition teachers. They represent all grade levels, a critical element in the NET format, for (6) ***the writing problem can be addressed most effectively by having teachers from all levels work together.*** Elementary teachers have traditionally been somewhat intimidated by the supposed specialized knowledge of secondary teachers, and secondary people in turn have sometimes regarded elementary personnel as having little specific knowledge of subject matter, especially the teaching of writing. College teachers often believe they are the only ones who know what's going on. When teachers of varying levels come together, they realize how much they have in common, and how much they have to offer one another. Motivational techniques used by fourth grade teachers can be adapted for tenth; brainstorming approaches found effective in ninth grade can be used in the sixth. Skill in writing develops over a period of years, and the exchange of information among teachers of various levels encourages a comprehensive view of the process and its relationship to other kinds of growth.

"My most surprising discovery is the affinity between fellow writers and teachers of writing." - High School Teacher

Thus in their daily sessions during the summer institute, NET fellows exchanged information by demonstrating practical techniques each had developed to teach writing. Presentations dealt with topics such as journal writing, peer response groups, teaching writing through the arts, the role of dialects in composition, student publications, loop writing, imitation and stylistics, descriptive writing, expressive writing, the expository paragraph and essay, saturation reports, media and writing, research paper writing, prewriting, and editing. These practical demonstrations were supplemented with presentations by the institute directors and outside consultants, each specializing in some aspect of teaching composition.

"Meeting other teachers and sharing ideas has changed my entire attitude toward teaching. I no longer feel isolated in what I am doing. I would recommend — even urge — any teacher to participate in one of these institutes." -College Teacher

Project fellows also wrote regularly, for NET advocates that (7) ***teachers of writing should write.*** Ironically, teaching English is one of the few professions that requires almost no writing. NET fellows soon learned that they were going to compose more than an occasional note to the principal: they wrote poems, plays, stories, fables, essays, narratives, descriptions, arguments; they wrote spontaneously and they wrote carefully; they produced specific assignments and free-writing assignments; they wrote before the institute, during and after it — they wrote every day in all the forms and manners that could be introduced in five weeks and then realized that they had left much more undone. Their efforts renewed their appreciation for the fears and problems encountered by student writers, and the variety of their writing assignments provided models for equally varied tasks for their students. Several teachers commented that for them the most significant feature of the NET was their own writing.

NET now has seventy-five fellows, already identified as capable composition teachers, who have had an oppor-

tunity to work with each other as professionals and to learn even more about the research and pedagogy of teaching composition. These teachers will carry this information back to their schools. But this is not enough. The NDEA institutes of the 1960s had virtually no measurable impact on improving student writing because the teachers who attended those institutes returned to their classrooms and had little opportunity to disseminate the information and expertise they acquired. The NET avoids this by emphasizing inservice education. For (8) *the best teacher of teachers is another teacher.* If change is to come about in the teaching of composition, it must come from the ranks of professional composition teachers who have many successful techniques and much practical information to offer their colleagues. They are familiar with the problems that teachers encounter daily, and they have had time to test and prove their methods in the classroom. For these and other reasons, they are more effective than transient, outside consultants in their work with teachers. The NET cadre is trained to present inservice workshops for teachers in local schools and in fact that is what they are busy doing — demonstrating practical techniques for teaching writing.

In Region 7, NET fellows have been heavily involved with August inservice and workshops and conference throughout the year. They have worked with teachers in Nacogdoches and Gladewater, Longview and Tyler, Cayuga and Palestine, and Carthage and Center; in all they have presented workshops for teachers representing more than thirty independent school districts. In Region 10 the NET cadre has also conducted inservice workshops prior to the opening of school and during the school year. These workshops are geared to the needs of teachers within selected districts: in Mesquite, Dallas, Richardson, and Greenville, for example.

The NET believes that (9) *inservice education must be continuous*, and the project has been conceived as a continuing operation, with subsequent summer institutes planned for future fellows so that each year the cadre of Teacher/Consultants grows in size and diversity, thus providing even more expertise for later inservice workshops.

"It has been GREAT!" -7th Grade Language Arts Teacher

Teachers who join the project commit themselves to more than one year of participation and are active in the planning of summer institutes and inservice programs for other teachers.

And the NET does not limit participation in the summer institutes or the inservice workshops to English and language arts teachers. (10) *Writing is the responsibility of all departments — science, social science, and education as well as English — and of all teachers regardless of their subject field.* Many English teachers have advocated this view over the years, but it has seldom received its due consideration. The NET believes that writing across the curriculum is central to the whole problem of composition in the schools. Since writing is one means of learning, the NET encourages teachers of all disciplines to join the effort.

(11) *A nationwide need exists to improve students' writing regardless of their prospective occupation or level of education.* That need is even more critical in Texas, and the NET is a response from within the profession to the challenge of improving teaching and in turn improving student writing. The NorthEast Texas Writing Project and its companions, the Texas Hill Country Writing Project, The East Texas Writing Project and others across the state and nation, "may represent," as Ben F. Nelms writes in the February 1979 issue of *English Education*, "a new professionalism in English — a professionalism that transcends what practicing teachers perceive as the narrow academicism of college English departments and the intellectually suspect pragmatism of colleges of education."

THE SIMPLE DESULTORY RHETORIC

by Jim Zinn and Toni Greenwaldt
NorthEast Texas Writing Project

I been Peter Elbowed, Frank D'Angelo'd
I been loop written, critique bitten
I been Francis Christensened relentlessly
I been Moffeted 'til I blew my lid
Five long weeks and we're finally rid
Of two comp profs who simply can't agree.

I been heuristicated and generated
I been point of viewed 'til I'm almost rude
To anyone who tries to edit me.
An' I heard the story from Ken Macrorie
An' all of my art won't make me smart,
An' so I imitate a paragraph a day.

I knew a man whose bag of tricks was small,
Couldn't motivate the kids at all.
Not the same as you and me. He doesn't teach writing free.
He's so downtaught when you say St. Francis . . .
He thinks you're talking 'bout Assisi
(Whatever that is.)
The man ain't got no rhetoric.
But we all do . . . six hours from ETSU.

I been point of viewed an' my style's so screwed
I combined the sentence and done grammar pennance
Engfishers I know will never die.
I been Irvin'd, Fulkerson'd day and night
'Til rhetoric's all my pen can write.
Still somehow I just hate to say good-bye.

Based on "A Simple Desultory Phillipic" by Paul Simon

Susan G. Bennett
University of Texas at Austin

The Texas Hill Country Writing Project

speaking listening
reading writing
Learning Sharing
Teaching

The Texas Hill Country Writing Project (THCWP) has undergone a transformation and experienced a revelation this summer (1980); for the first time since its inception three years ago, the THCWP included teachers of grades one through junior college. Previously, financial as well as other constraints limited summer institute writing project participants to secondary school (seventh through twelfth grade) teachers. A series of events provided us with one junior college and six elementary school "guinea pigs" and *none* of us will ever be the same! I would like to share our concerns and triumphs so that other writing projects and individual teachers can benefit from our experiences and can recognize fellow teachers at *all* levels as the valuable resources they are.

The first elementary teacher I interviewed as a potential THCWP candidate expressed a concern shared among all six of the early grade teachers: "How will I compare with high school and junior high English teachers? They know grammar, usage, and composition skills! They are accustomed to presenting in front of older students and other adults. What can I possibly offer them that they will find interesting and useful for their older, more sophisticated audiences?" Though perhaps naively, I assured each subsequent elementary teacher that she had nothing to worry about.

Though somewhat more circumspect about their feelings, the secondary teachers also intimated some apprehension. "Will the elementary teachers expect us to know *everything?* Will they consider us authorities on any imaginable topic connected with English and language only to be disappointed by our fallibility? Will we, as secondary teachers, be forced to endure elementary school 'fun-and-games' while verifying our suspicions that 'no wonder our kids don't know anything when we get them!' Will we be 'allowed' to make mistakes in our writing without eliciting snide smiles from the elementary teachers?" I assured the secondary teachers that every attempt would be made to keep them off a pedestal while encouraging the elementary teachers to value the importance of where their students were going and how to prepare them to arrive there successfully.

Personally, I was confident we could overcome our differences in grade level interests, but I was concerned about drawing together the relationship between sound theory and successful practice. As a newcomer to the directorship of the THCWP, would I be able to convince an extremely discrepant and varied group of people that Elbow, Moffett, Hairston, Kinneavy, Britton, Macrorie, Emig, O'Hare, et al., had something to contribute to each of them? Would I have the resources to plant seeds of new ideas, to break down old beliefs, to alter well-worn habits, to change minds and influence teaching practices?

So the three groups of us — six elementary teachers, thirteen secondary (including junior college) teachers, and one university project director — met for the first time on June 3, warily and tentatively eyeing our neighbors, intuitively clustering in grade-level groupings ready to "take each other on." None of us needed to have worried — all of us got more than we had bargained for.

Without exception, each participant gained a profound understanding and admiration for other teachers of grades one through fourteen, of special education programs for the gifted, and a new respect for the role of theory in developing classroom curricula. We all learned from one another, developed strategies for adapting methods and materials to specific needs, and found comfort in our abilities to substantiate intuitions with the theory and research of "authorities" in the composition process. We are publishing two booklets containing our literary and workshop achievements, and we developed a camaraderie that should serve and strengthen us long into our careers. But how did all of this come about?

First of all, the THCWP, like the other writing projects associated with the Bay Area Writing Project, is committed to the belief that experienced teachers have a complex of special

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skills and talents that need but a nudge of encouragement to be recognized and shared. To a person, each participant in the THCWP was interested in writing and, therefore, had spent some time as a "closet" writer and at the same time was certain that she was only half successful and that no one else could possibly be interested in her feeble attempts. It took us but two days of prewriting exercises, hushed whispers over lunch, and a series of provocative question and answer sessions with Geneva Pilgrim, originator of the Texas Hill Country Writing Project, to unplug the dam of self-doubt, lack of confidence, and suspicion that had held back communication among us all. And, forgetting our different orientations, we talked, and we shared, and we grew.

Second, we read. In addition to receiving an extensive reading list developed over the years by many of us interested in research and methodology in composition, we broke into reading groups based on individual interests. For example, those interested in sentence-combining would take turns reading O'Hare, Mellon, et al., and then discuss what had been learned. The reading groups helped us to assimilate a variety of literature in a brief five-week time span. Furthermore, by reading in groups, we were able to discuss what we had read with others similarly informed. Of great impact was the realization that many of our classroom practices were logical, based on research and experimentation. How exhilarating to learn that others share our ideas, concerns, and that we are not alone! Less easy was letting go of long held beliefs *not* supported by our readings, for example, that grammar instruction, as such, does not transfer to improved compositions. But regardless of our grade level teaching assignment, we read, and we shared, and we grew.

Third, we listened. A series of guest speakers generously gave of their time and expertise on a variety of topics ranging from writing-anxiety research to issues of grading, correcting and evaluating writing. Each speaker added a new dimension to our knowledge of the writing process. Our understanding was growing deeper and wider and fuller as we listened, and shared, and grew.

And, of course, we wrote. We wrote in journals; we wrote poetry; we wrote essays, articles, abstracts, and short stories. We wrote letters. We wrote reviews of research. We wrote curriculum guides and teaching plans, and rationales for instructional practices. We wrote rough drafts, second drafts, edited drafts and final drafts. We wrote alone; we wrote in pairs; we wrote in groups. But we always shared our writing with one other or more, utilizing peer responses and editing. By this time, the barriers among elementary teachers and secondary teachers had begun crumbling. No longer did each group see the other as a distinct entity and individuals sought writing help from others based less on teaching proficiencies and more on common composing interests and needs. Elementary teachers no longer dreaded the advanced training and "superior" knowledge of higher grade-level teachers; secondary teachers no longer feared displaying vulnerability by asking help from primary grade teachers.

Finally, everyone recognized the valuable role that theory and research play in the teaching/learning profession. No longer must we idiosyncratically defend our classroom practices, hoping not to be challenged by colleagues, administrators, parents. No more do we need to close our doors and "sneak" fifteen minutes of expressive writing into our classrooms, nor must we endure silently uneasy feelings when asked to teach grammar, writing, reading, and oral language as isolated subjects. All of us who participated in the THCWP this summer have the fuel to publicly justify our procedures.

But — a *but* always seems to appear in the most ideal circumstances — all of us concerned with education and the language arts still face an arduous struggle. Not only did some of us find change painful, but also we knew we must still contend with our particular situations. How do we cope with district expectations and curriculum guides that require the teaching of grammar as an isolated subject or, at best, the teaching of composition as an appendage to the study of grammar? How do we respond to critics who argue that any writings aside from essays and research reports are "frivolous," heaven forbid—fun, and "best left to the primary grades?" How do we react to community and parental pressure that we grade each and every word our students write or "youngsters won't learn proper standards"? How do we deal with teacher accountability as defined by student success on standardized tests? How do those of us straddling the fence of ambivalence deal with our own uncertainties and consciences? What are our responsibilities? Are we adequately preparing students for college as well as the working world? Do test scores reflect teacher inadequacies?

As an educator who has had the opportunity to work with a writing project, my best response to the above questions must remain, at this point, the following. If the Texas Hill Country Writing Project is typical of other National Writing Projects, it is a testimony to the power of teaching writing by writing and the value of integrating all the language arts. Teachers, like students at all ages, are learners and are not so different from the people faced on the other side of the desk nine months every year. The best indicators of sound teaching are dramatic strides in learning, and the lessons we learned this summer would serve our students well:

- We learned to trust our peers in improving our skills in expression;
- We learned independence in learning with less need for a teacher;
- We learned self-confidence;
- We learned where and how to find answers and supports from experts in a discipline;
- We learned to embrace rather than fear a blank page and a pen;
- We learned the agony and joy of creating a written message;
- We learned something about the ordering of priorities;
- We learned that learning need not be painful but can be fun;
- We learned that doing is more satisfying than learning *about* doing;
- We learned there is more than one way to teach writing effectively, and
- We learned ways of improving our own writing.

In conclusion, the participants of the Texas Hill Country Writing Project developed what look to be long term professional and personal relationships based on working together. Six weeks later, we are still sending manuscripts back and forth for peer response. Phone calls requesting help in curriculum planning become more frequent among the teachers at all levels. Enthusiasm is being generated for bi-weekly in-service workshops. Although one might be naive to imagine that this level of interaction will be maintained over a long period of time, certainly good habits have begun and hopefully will endure. At the very least, all twenty of us know that we have undergone irrevocable change.

Joyce Armstong Carroll
McMurry College, Abilene

A Proper Commitment to Writing

In the spring issue of *English in Texas*, William A. Owens tells a marvelous story about "a proper kind of commitment to writing." As I read along, I thought back to 1977 when the New Jersey Writing Project began. I saw twenty-five teachers sacrificing part of their summer to write, to study the latest writing theories, and to work on practical classroom writing strategies. Owens helped me realize that participation in a writing project calls for a proper commitment to writing. And, as in Owens' story, it is commitment, after all, that makes the difference.

Originally, the New Jersey Writing Project (NJWP) was a consortium of Rutgers University, the Educational Testing Service, and nineteen New Jersey project and control school districts. Its goal was to improve student writing by improving the teaching of writing, predicated on these assumptions: (a) teachers of writing should write, (b) writing is a mode of learning, (c) teachers teaching teachers accomplish efficient curricular change, and (d) theory about and assessment of writing enhance classroom practices. The conceptual framework, based upon the Emig model, included: (a) the project's major goal and four assumptions, (b) Emig's theory of the composing process, (c) a bimodal theory of discourse (reflexive/extensive), and (d) process into product methodology.

After a year of testing (1977-78) and a year of analyzing the data (1978-79), Dr. Emig and I, Co-directors of NJWP, along with the project's statistician and two district representatives, met with Deputy Commissioner of Education John Evans, and members of the Joint Dissemination Review Panel in Washington, D.C., for a full review of the project. On May 23, 1979, NJWP was endorsed and designated a National Diffusion Network Developer/Demonstrator Project.

In my present position as Professor of English and Writing at McMurry College I worked jointly with Robert Maniss, Assistant Director of Region XIV's Education Service Center, and with the present Director of NJWP, Linda Waitkus, to bring the project to Texas. The Texas Education Agency notified us during the latter part of June that our proposal had been approved under a Title IV-C grant. The teacher-training institute then was set for July 21 through August 8, 1980. Our project, entitled "Improving Writing Competency in Secondary Schools," was immediately and affectionately truncated to "Project Competency" by the sixteen teachers, representing five districts, who willingly made "a proper kind of commitment to writing" by fully participating in the summer institute.

With that background information, I would like to specifically discuss what teacher and district commitment entails and what difference that kind of commitment makes in the writing competencies of students. My purpose is one of affirmation.

Teacher commitment is generative, extending from self (the institute) to students (implementation and assessment) to school districts (staff development and in-service programs). District commitment is sustentative assuring a consistent support system for these teachers. This reciprocity of commitment results in an effective training/transference schema. Figure 1 illustrates this interplay.

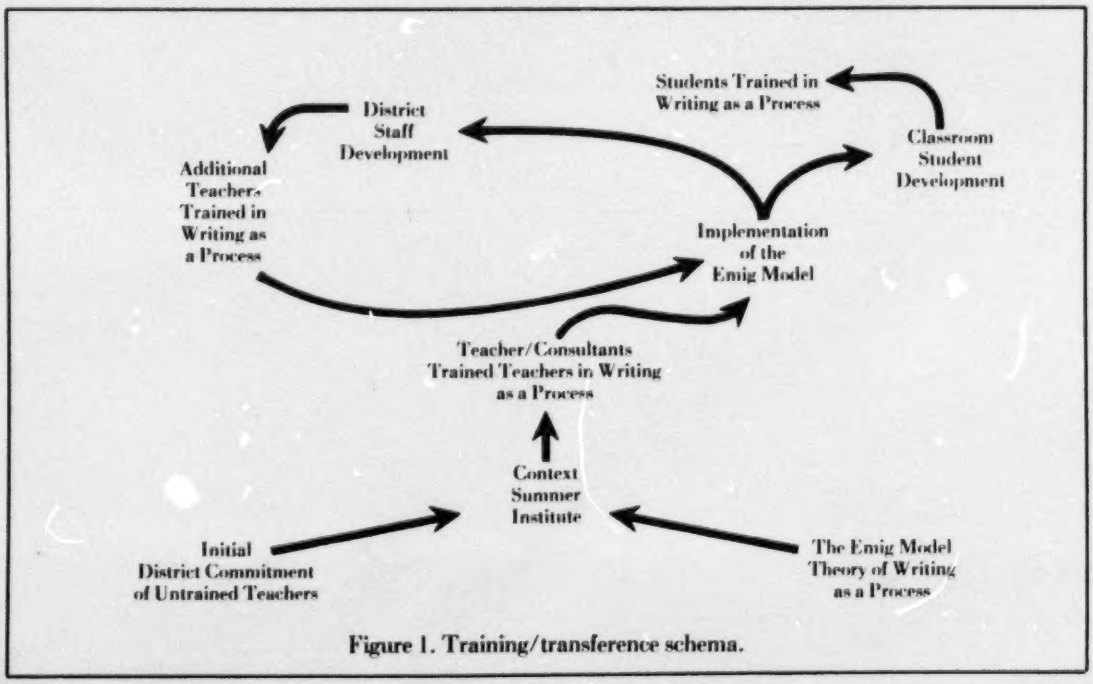
Students Trained in Writing as a Process
District Staff Development
Classroom Student Development
Additional Teachers Trained in Writing as a Process
Implementation of the Emig Model
Teacher/Consultants Trained Teachers in Writing as a Process
Context Summer Institute
Initial District Commitment of Untrained Teachers
The Emig Model Theory of Writing as a Process

Figure 1. Training/transference schema.

THE INSTITUTE

Teachers participating in this three-week, sixty-hour summer institute write for at least one hour every morning — the significance of writing conveyed by its placement first on the schedule. At first the writing is free and self-sponsored, but as the institute progresses, other stimuli activate writing: peer suggestions, conferences with the trainer and assistant trainer, presentations, and the assignment of two polished pieces, preferably in the reflexive and extensive modes, due at the institute's end. One of these pieces is incorporated into an anthology. Thus teachers grapple with their writing and their writing processes, in some cases for the first time. To facilitate analysis of these experiences, teachers are encouraged to keep portfolios of *all* their writing.

During the next hour, small groups of four to seven people form. Each teacher reads his or her piece of writing aloud twice. Peers react orally and in writing, testing a variety of criteria sheets or commenting directly on each other's papers. Evaluation moves deductively from general reactions to specific analysis of grammar, style, tone, purpose, audience, syntax, diction, paragraphing, form, and so forth. Also during this time, teachers may choose to meet for individual conferences with the trainers. These conferences promote guidance on work in progress.

After sharing, discussing, and conferencing, distinctive not prescriptive reformulation occurs. While advice is taken into consideration, personal preference arbitrates final rewrites. The tasks of correcting, revising, and rewriting — theorized as separate functions within the composing process, internal and external revisions — naturally grow out of the writing, not out of some remote mechanical rules.

In her *CCC* article, "Writing as a Mode of Learning," Emig builds upon the work of Vygotsky, Luria, Bruner, and Revesz in stressing her thesis that writing is *unique* because it enables immediate "feedback, as well as reinforcement . . . because information from the *process* is immediately and visibly available as that portion of the *product* already written." Therefore, it is easy to see how the writing done during the institute becomes a mode of learning about writing as well as a mode of learning about the teaching of writing.

Variety follows the writing and sharing. Visiting speakers, brief lectures, interactive dialogues, and large group discussions revolve around theory, research, and practical experiences. Teachers use Emig's *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* for basic process theory; excerpts from Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers* for practical group sharing suggestions; Weaver's *Grammar for Teachers* for ways to teach grammar within the context of the writing process; and Stanford's *How to Handle the Paper Load* for tips on that topic. Additionally, two recently released books on composition round out the readings. *Composition and Its Teaching*, edited by Richard C. Gebhardt, presents a balanced collection of articles from *CCC* during Ed Corbett's editorship. Koch and Brazil's *Strategies for Teaching the Composition Process* provides a rich resource of classroom techniques. Reprints of selected articles and a bibliography for further reading complete the reading repertoire.

Teacher presentations conclude each day's work. Through this activity, teachers share their best writing lessons. The emphasis is on involvement: the teacher teaches, the rest simulate the student role. Usually a discussion of implications and variation follows.

IMPLEMENTATION

Returning to their classrooms, teachers introduce writing as a process by following the Emig Model and integrating it into the existing curricula. This implementation is individual, each teacher instituting the essential elements of the summer institute according to the needs of students and district requirements. Generally each teacher provides some time for in-class pre-writing, writing, and rewriting activities. To provide a model, the teacher often writes during these times. Students receive instruction in the process of effective editorial feedback and form critical groups. In these groups students respond to the drafts of their peers by using Elbow's pointing, summarizing, telling and showing techniques and by using specific editing guides designed during the institute by their teachers. In addition to peer responses, each teacher is able to incorporate various methods of individual conferencing during the drafting stages. Thus, students have useful teacher and peer comments upon which to build successive drafts.

When students enter the reformulation phase of the process, the tasks of correcting (eliminating mechanical errors and stylistic infelicities), revising (shifting larger segments of materials), and rewriting (completely reformulating a piece or totally scrapping it to begin anew) grow meaningfully out of continuous writing and sharing, not out of remote rules or out of cryptic marks made on some previously completed product. Like their teachers, students maintain writing portfolios.

ASSESSMENT

Teachers pretest in September and posttest in May in order to obtain information on (a) students' writing competencies, (b) students' writing attitudes, (c) the correlations between writing and attitude. In addition, a project/control situation assesses the effect of teacher training in the writing process on the written product of students.

The instruments for assessment include the Emig Attitude Survey (student version) and Writing Topic I. This writing stimulus involves nonlimiting field, mode, and tenor of discourse options. The nature of the testing conditions — a timed, impromptu piece of writing — provide the limitations.

In-service workshops conducted by the consultants train teachers in the holistic scoring of writing samples and in methods for assessing the surveys. During the final workshop, teachers with their test results write a district report.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND IN-SERVICE PROGRAMS

Teachers returning to their districts apprise administrators of the rationale and philosophy of the program as well as of its effectiveness and economic feasibility. The program requires no new materials, a great attribute during these times of budget cuts. Actual students' papers form the natural basis for skills instruction. Literature texts retain their usual function. Writing texts, materials, and handbooks become resources.

In brief, the staff development stage of the program fits the needs of the district. Programs model upon the summer institute even though time and need differ. For example, some teachers conduct mini-institute work-

shops; others find faculty-wide awareness sessions necessary. Teachers from one district often visit another. Most important are the in-service programs providing a consistent inter-and intra-support system. In addition, newsletters sent to the districts document the status of all the participating districts at interim periods between September and May.

The staff development and in-service programs prove valuable in improving the writing competencies in secondary schools because:

- Trained teachers, sensitive to their own classroom and district needs, can direct the writing program to meet those needs.
- Other teachers (those who did not receive the summer institute training) can observe what is occurring in the trained teachers' classes.
- Since the trained teachers are present in the schools each day, various methods can diffuse the program in a quick, cost-efficient manner.
- Teachers have the security of district commitment.

The existing data of NJWP are predictive. "A proper kind of commitment to writing" by teacher and district yields some or all of the following results:

- Writing improves.
- Students direct their writing toward a variety of audiences.
- Students share their writing with peers.
- Students become more aware of the composing processes, of how they write.
- Students transfer their writing skills into other content areas.
- Teachers and students help at varying stages of the composing process, before and during writing and while editing.
- Support skills are taught according to individual needs and within the context of meaningful writing.
- Attitudes toward writing become more positive.
- More writing by both teachers and students occurs.
- Students reformulate freely.
- Students vary sentence lengths, styles, and work toward precision of work choice.
- Writing becomes syntactically more mature.
- More time is spent in contemplation of the product (re-reading, thinking).
- There are greater numbers of pre-writing, group-sharing, and reformulating activities.
- Everyone is more excited about writing.

Perhaps the most rewarding, reinforcing outcome of these data is that training in process was a potent influence on the development of writing ability. Students of teachers so trained showed significant progress in their writing performance. "Project Competency" teachers know a proper commitment to writing makes the difference. They advertise it. Throughout Region XIV you can find them wearing their blue and white buttons (compliments of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.) which proudly proclaim:

"I'VE RENEWED
MY COMMITMENT
TO GOOD WRITING."

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DESK

Carolyn Cartwright
NorthEast Texas Writing Project

What's on your paper?
That's what they ask.
Does it describe, tell a story? they ask.
Did you use strong verbs,
Complete verbs, alive verbs?
That's what they ask.

They don't know the real me,
The inside me, the fun me.
They just pick on me,
Call on me, correct me,
Sentence me, grammar me.
That's all they know.

What can you write?
What can you say?
Be vivid, be colorful,
You have something to say.
Oh, yes, you can write,
You have something to say.

Ain't got nothin' to say,
Just wanna go fishin' or giggin'
Shoot baskets, run track, eat peanuts, or sleep.
This room is a hot box, a stupid box,
Squeaking old desks, hot blowing fans,
Blabbing old woman with beans in her head.

Tell me your likes,
What can you say?
Write me a poem, tell me a tale.
Put it on paper, this way or that.
Paint me a picutre,
What can you say?

That's all they do,
Tell us to write!
But . . . on what I like?
On paper, my likes? Write what I like?
This ain't so bad,
I'll
Write
What
I
Like!

Margaret B. Fleming
University of Arizona

We're Doing Something "Write"

Whenever the public or the press discovers another bit of evidence that Johnny or Janie "can't write," whether that means trouble with spelling, low scores on tests, or complete incoherence on paper, the nation's English teachers, like revolving ducks at a carnival, come up for another series of pot shots.

"Why aren't these teachers doing their jobs?" the critics ask. And we can reply — quite truthfully — that teaching writing is not a simple matter like bolting parts in place on an assembly line, that we are hampered by overcrowded classes, too much red tape, and colleagues who think that writing belongs exclusively in the English classroom.

But all this sounds too defensive. What we should be doing is letting the public know about our positive accomplishments. One in particular that has not received the publicity it should is the National Writing Project. This grass-roots movement began in 1974 with the Bay Area Writing Project, jointly sponsored by the University of California at Berkeley and local school districts. Now in its sixth year, this project has inspired many similar projects across the nation, a total of sixty-seven to date. Most of them were initially funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, which matched funds from local sources. Many have been repeated and flourished, without government support, in subsequent years. They have become so popular that some sites report as many as six or seven writing projects taking place simultaneously.

Two colleagues and I have recently conducted one of these writing projects on the University of Arizona campus. Like all the writing projects, it was based on two assumptions: (1) that teachers of writing must themselves write frequently and think of themselves as writers, and (2) that superior teachers of writing have much to learn from each other.

Our seventeen participants had been identified as superior by their administrators and colleagues. Further, it was a diverse group who taught from first grade to college freshman level. Their subjects included journalism, social studies, special education, and business, in addition to English.

For six weeks we met four days a week, five hours a day. We wrote for an hour every day and twice a week broke into three small groups for sharing and criticizing each other's work. Each participant gave a presentation to the group on a successful aspect of teaching writing. We also had a number of guest speakers, several of them nationally prominent. In addition, the participants read books and articles for theoretical background. It was an intense and exhausting experience, but exhilarating.

Our participants did come increasingly to think of themselves as writers. In addition to the several formal papers required, they wrote in other modes — autobiographies, character sketches, historical narratives, satires. Interestingly, quite a few who had never done so before wrote poetry. We had asked them as part of the course to write something "suitable for publication," and while not all of their submissions have yet been published, they wrote everything from letters to the editor to poems for local newsletters to full articles for national magazines like *Arizona Highways*. About half the participants continue to meet weekly to share and discuss their writing.

The writing that these teachers did and continue to do engages them in a way that the typical school assignment does not. Most school assignments fail because the assigned topics are not meaningful to the students, because the audience is the teacher in the role of examiner, and because the emphasis is on avoiding error. Our participants discovered that when they write for an audience whose responses are important, anything that hinders effective expression is not an "error" to be marked in red, but a problem that can be solved with the audience's help. Revision thus becomes meaningful also.

As teachers, the participants' attitudes also changed. One said, "I feel for my kids more now." Another said, "I did a lot of things before just because the kids enjoyed them or they seemed to work, but now I have a theoretical basis for what I do." Another commented, "I thought I was teaching writing when all I was doing was marking errors." Several participants told us they could hardly wait to get back to school to try out their new ideas.

It would be foolish to claim that the program was 100% successful and trouble-free. One teacher wrote, "It has been a great experience, and I've learned a lot, but I still have a poor image of myself as a writer." Another said, "I've learned too much. I'm aware of all these needs my students have, and I can't meet them." Still another, writing about a deeply felt personal experience in response to a guest speaker's assignment, became very emotional, broke down, and couldn't go on. This would not have happened of course with a typical "safe" assignment.

Writing can be self-discovery, as this experience showed. But it doesn't have to be this personal to be a tool for learning. Students can discover through writing, for example, how to set up a business partnership or what happens in a chemical experiment. Nor does every piece of writing have to be edited and corrected to be valuable, any more than every word a student utters has to be graded. If we could get rid of the idea that writing is done only to be corrected, we might do much to expand it from the English classroom into other parts of the curriculum, where it has equally valuable functions to perform.

Our participants are on their way to doing just that. As teacher-consultants, they have returned to their schools, where they lead workshops, organize writing groups, and are available for suggestions and help. In the future, any of them can be called upon by other school districts to conduct in-service courses. The fees thus generated will return to the Writing Project to help it become self-supporting.

We expect the program to continue to grow, with ever-widening circles of enthusiasm and participation. More Johnnies and Janies — and their teachers — will discover that they can write, will write, and will learn by writing.

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Ken Macrorie, Professor Emeritus
Western Michigan University

Truth is Luckier

"The lack of [the habit of telling truths] gave us Watergate and a failure to face our actions in Vietnam. The lack of it gives us Doublespeak . . . ."

Scholars, teachers, and philosophers approach the matter of truth fearfully, a quick dip of the beak and a step backwards. Did I taste truth or a fraudulent elixir? They're properly afraid that it will turn out to be cyanide rather than fruit juice. Words can pour into an ear so easily and paralyze the whole nervous system. Part of the difficulty these thinkers have encountered has arisen because they usually deal with truth as a concept to be defined, not as an act which creates and recreates relationships between people.

To find and study truth in the act of its telling is — as Walt Whitman said of dying — "different from what anyone supposed, and luckier." A few high-school and college teachers around the country in touch with each other for the last five to fifteen years have been conducting writing classes in which students begin by putting down whatever comes to their minds as long as it is some kind of truth, small or large, and not something phony or pretentious. Then the best of their passages are read anonymously to the other members of the group who are asked to voice only those feelings which are positive about the writing. If they do not like it, they are to remain silent — not to speak falsely or deceptively, but simply not to speak. In this writing, truth comes easier than usual. It's not such a risk.

After a couple of weeks, the writers are asked to choose a subject, or if they wish, to write on a topic given to the group, such as "Write of a moment when you played the role of the other sex, whatever that was for you at the time." Or, "Write about someone else in your family." Still the one stricture: try to tell truths, not Absolute Truth — who knows that? — but what seems true to the world outside and inside you. Then when the paper is read aloud to the group its members are allowed to test those truths, to voice any reaction — negative or positive — and to suggest how the writing might be improved.

Week after week, month after month, class after class, these teachers have observed human beings striving to write truths. I've conducted thirty-eight of these seminars myself. Here are some of the results: As writing truthfully comes to be taken for granted, spoken responses to the writing increase in truthfulness. Writers find themselves and others more vividly in their memories. And the listeners, like readers of good literature, are reassured to find that the writers live interior lives like theirs, and occasionally they're stretched by experiences beyond anything they've imagined. As writers they seldom use cliches. They frequently write papers that don't waste words. Without realizing what they're doing, they often employ metaphor, parallel construction, alliteration, assonance, and other sound effects that excite their audiences to praise. At times almost all the writers feel the influence of what for centuries has been called the "Muse," and their sentences take on rhythms that occur only when the pen is recording a single, authentic voice.

After fifteen years of this experience, I've had to conclude that when human beings are encouraged to write truths free of the usual institutional directors, formulators, and stipulators that sit like Hieronymus Bosch demons on writers' shoulders, they find unsuspected language powers. Asked to write freely but truthfully, they turn to their own experience where they feel most sure of truth. So we teachers received stories or narratives, not essays, reports, or abstracted descriptions.

Often students who were thought untalented and "semi-literate" amaze us with their eloquence and insight, their ability to articulate emotion that has been, as Wordsworth said, "recollected in tranquility." Yet their achievement is minimized by some critics and editors of the mass media who say, "These writings are lively, but they're not the kind of writing that schools should be preparing students to do." Some teachers say, "We must be preparing high-school students to write college research papers, and college freshmen to write term-papers, and college seniors to write theses in graduate school."

But there is another kind of preparation that should come first: the practice into habit of telling truths. The lack of it gave us Watergate and a failure to face our actions in Vietnam. The lack of it gives us Doublespeak in government and industry. We've found that when human beings tell stories of their own experience, one truth breeds another, and the tone of the enterprise becomes richer. People are still individuals and scratch each other, fail each other; but as the level of truth-telling rises in the room, the level of valuable human intercourse also rises.

The people in these writing seminars learn the agonies of truthtelling. They put themselves before the class in their writing and learn objectivity. They discover the need for pseudonyms and for protection of themselves and those they write about. They understand Lincoln's assertion, "Honesty is the best policy" — that our policy should be trying for truths, not equivocation or cover-up, because finally it's more comfortable, provides a firmer base for living. To those who cry that writing classes must "return to the basics" we say that our students are locating the first basic. They don't discuss truth in the abstract but they see what happens to themselves and to the others who meet several times a week and live with truths.

Susan Bussard
Mesquite, Texas, I.S.D.

The I-Search Process:

An Alternative to Research

As a fellow of the Northeast Texas Writing Project of 1979, I heard Ken Macrorie, noted authority on teaching composition and author of *Searching Writing*, present the process called I-Search. Unlike the traditional research paper that requires the writer to be divorced emotionally from the subject, the writer of an I-Search paper becomes subjectively involved. For only by being immersed in the subject will the writer care enough to examine all aspects, thus enabling him or her to deal with the topic thoroughly and objectively. An I-Search paper is at the same time personal and objective. I was intrigued with the approach because I dreaded the prospect of reading 138 dull, perfunctory research papers. Here was a way to make research relevant to the students' lives because they would look for something they were interested in. As Ken Macrorie explained his process with reference to college students, I realized that it could easily be adapted to the high school level.

Back in the classroom, I read an I-Search paper furnished by Ken Macrorie called "A Camera Right for Me" to my eleventh grade students. At once they were interested, for the writer told about how she had decided to spend $200. Many asked, "Can we write like that?" "Can we use 'I'?" "That sounds like fun." I told them to go out, to let a subject find them, then to tell me within the next few days what it was. Macrorie says, "Allow something to choose you, something you want to know or possess, intensely."

For the next two weeks as we finished a literature unit, the students came with topics that had "found" them. Several decided to search for the "right" college. Many chose to investigate a career. Some currently employed decided to search out the more technical aspects of their jobs. One student wanted to redecorate her room at home. Some students tied their I-Search to science fair projects. Everyone was interested in something; no one felt the assignment just another laborious task to be performed for the English teacher.

I had taught the eleventh grade research paper previously as a highly structured process. To make I-Search work, I had to consider carefully how to modify the stringent requirements and maintain the interest of the students. I wanted to avoid the over-instruction/destruction syndrome. As I had previously taught the research paper, broad topics had to be narrowed. A certain number and type of sources had to be consulted. Students were required to take X number of notes. Student and teacher were more concerned with individual details than total process.

With Macrorie's approach, the question of narrowing the topic never came up. Each student came to me with a topic already narrowed. What could be more specific than "How to Install an Automatic Transmission" or "The Best College of Veterinary Medicine in Texas"? The students, already grouped for literary discussions, met for ten to fifteen minutes with me in class. I asked each one to tell the group what he intended to do in the search. Sometimes I made suggestions for sources, and frequently other members of the group had a friend or relative who was an "expert" in the field. An "expert," we decided, need not be a certain age or have a college degree. Some students decided to write letters, telephone agencies, and set up appointments for interviews. We discussed how to conduct an interview and the best ways to approach informants. Each inquiry added new knowledge, and students soon learned how to recognize a reliable expert.

All through the process, I had to decide how much instruction to give. I wanted the students to feel free to explore all possibilities, and I also wanted them to feel secure. I reviewed the card catalogue, *Reader's Guide*, and reference sources in the library. Then we met class in the school library for two days to gather sources for a working bibliography. Soon the students were ready to take notes from available material. Because they were used to structure, I set up some general guidelines for gathering and collecting information. After sampling a variety of sources, they had to determine the reliable ones. They considered how up-to-date the source was and whether the author held any biases. They took notes on index cards or looseleaf paper or stenopad — anything. However, each note had to have a source label, page number, and subject label. The fact that they did not have to use index cards seemed to dispel some fears. Subject labels on the notes came from a preliminary outline which grew out of two brief compositions: "What I Already Know About ____" and "What I want to Learn About ____." The outline evolved from the latter. Writing these two compositions made the students see immediately where the search needed to begin and where it was going, thus saving valuable time.

One question came up frequently: "How many sources and notes do we have to have?" Instead of giving an absolute answer, I said, "Take notes from the sources you think are best. Take as many as necessary, but pay attention to the quality of notes and sources rather than quantity." Thus, evaluation of notes was based on appropriateness, not number. Most students used five to seven sources. They came laden with books and magazines to take notes in class for one week. During that time I held individual conferences to check on each student's progress.

After the notetaking process, I once again faced the question of how much instruction to give on how to write and document the paper. In the past, I had detailed instructions on how many footnotes to include and how to write from a balanced topic outline. I had always noticed that this period of instruction was stressful for me and frustrating to the students. So many details to remember! They did include an outline with the final version of the I-Search paper, but most completed it after the paper was written. There were very few problems with structure because the body of the paper became the story of the search. The question of subordination never came up.

Instead of detailed directions, therefore, I wrote on the blackboard:

TIPS ON I-SEARCH COMPOSITION

Part I. Instruction. Include the following:
- How I became interested in ____
- What I knew before the search
- What I needed to learn about ____
- Statement of purpose

Part II. The Story of the Search
- Describe in logical order the events of the search. Work in the notes taken from reading, interviews, and personal observations.

Part III. Conclusion
- What I learned (or didn't learn) about ____

Students were told to acknowledge the source of all information gathered in the course of the search. Quotes, summaries, paraphrases, and information from interviews should be acknowledged in the text of the paper, in footnotes, and in the bibliography, following the form in their grammar text.

Students understood the directions and began to write their stories. Soon, some realized that formal language was desirable, which they adapted to their own voice. Generally, they were ready, even eager, to write. They knew where the paper was going, and they had an audience other than the teacher to write for. We worked in class on the writing, and I made myself available for consultation. At this time much individual instruction on usage and mechanics took place. They cared about how the papers sounded. Most students wrote the first draft in two or three hours. Group editing sessions dealt with composition problems as they came up and before they became insurmountable. Before the final drafts came in, the students had at least two others read their papers for coherence and errors. They shared their I-Search papers eagerly.

I devised a point system for grading the final draft; thus they knew what would be evaluated before the papers were due. The emphasis was on "appropriateness." Did all the examples and quotes fit the tone and purpose of the paper? Were the sources appropriate to the subject as the student defined it? Was the writing style appropriate to the occasion? The effect of the content on the reader was important. Technical items such as grammar and mechanics were secondary. These errors were few. Most mechanical problems occurred in footnotes and bibliography notation — both new skills. Throughout the process, there was frequent evaluation by the students and the teacher. Students evaluated themselves on their performance in the search process; the teacher evaluted the results. Both counted in the final assessment.

Of the 138 students in four classes, 113 (82%) completed the I-Search process. About half of the remaining 18% got as far as writing the rough draft. More than a hundred students completed a voluntary self-evaluation which I read after all the papers were graded and recorded. Overwhelmingly, the students found the I-Search process easier than expected, more interesting, and generally a positive experience.

By minimizing the specific directions and requirements and not trying to anticipate the students' problems, the whole process was completed with amazing ease. The students taught themselves with occasional help from me. The most important role for the teacher of I-Search is that of a consultant, flexible and responsive to each student's enthusiasm for his subject. This provides for individualized instruction at its best.

The final word on I-Search belongs to the students themselves:

> I think this type of search paper is more rewarding than a regular research paper because you are searching on a subject you want to know more about for your own reasons.
>
> Some of the notes I took were not used in the actual writing of my paper, although they were used in my decision about which school I wanted to attend, which was the purpose of my paper.
>
> The people I interviewed liked the idea (I-Search) because they knew that I was really interested.
>
> The I-Search paper should be mandatory for everyone to write at least once in life.

At the end of the school year, I asked the students to write down what they thought had been the most beneficial class activities for them. Many listed I-Search as number one.

THEM PROSE WRITERS

Marvin Lee, Jan Dickson
NorthEast Texas Writing Project

How 'bout them prose writers
Ain't they plain
Sittin' and a writin'
Then chuckin' down the drain.

Writin' them essays,
Writin' them themes,
Don't know nuthin'
'Bout having them dreams.

How to be a prose writer?
Everybody knows it.
Grab yourself some paper
And haul off and prose it.

THEM SCHOOL TEACHERS

Buzz Session
NorthEast Texas Writing Project

How about them school
teachers,
Ain't they a bunch?
Hangin' round the lounge,
Shovin' in lunch.

Gripin' over students,
Grumblin' over pay,
Chewin' out administrators,
Havin' they say.

How to be a school teacher?
Do you wanna know?
Find yourself some class
And give it a go.

How to be a school teacher?
Give the job a tumble,
Open up your jaws
Rare back and grumble.

How to be a school teacher?
Get a college education
Frame them little critters,
And take a two months
vacation.

Kellan Kight Sarles
Princeton, West Virginia

Teaching Research Process Through the Use of Mini-papers

For the past four years, I have taught "Research Process" as a part of the Senior English elective program at Princeton High School. And, for the past four years, I have enjoyed a moderate amount of success but also an appreciable amount of failure. There have been students whose manuscripts were so mechanically poor that their message was unreadable, and students whose final products could have been reprinted in a textbook under "Examples of Gross Plagiarism." But surely the most distressing (and most prevalent) variety of failure has been the research paper which said nothing. Though its footnotes and Ibids. were all in their correct places, the paper was stale, voiceless, empty.

I have tried, through all this, to be equitable in assigning blame — first blaming the college text for being too difficult, then blaming the students themselves for their lack of maturity and self-discipline. I've periodically faulted the nine-week program which requires that too much be covered in that short interval. And finally, I've blamed myself — for being too critical, or not critical enough, or simply for failing to teach well enough whatever skill was most lacking.

But a truly objective evaluation of the course calls to light three particular problem areas:

- The course, as it was conceived and as I have taught it, has always placed too much emphasis on the final paper and not enough on the process (a fault inherent in most high school programs, I would imagine).
- The course has offered the student only one shot at collecting and assimilating the data and writing the paper, affording him no chance to practice before the final performance.
- The course has encouraged too little communication between instructor-and-student and student-and-student.

The project described herein began as a sincere attempt to remedy these problems and thus guarantee my high school students (1) a better course and (2) greater personal success.

PROJECT: PHASE I

I was greatly heartened to discover in the September/October 1979 issue of *Today's Education* that at least one other high school English instructor was experiencing the same kinds of problems. I was even more encouraged to read that teacher Joseph F. Bowman ("How Some teachers Teach Writing - By Teaching Term Paper Skills," pp. 35-36) had what looked to be a very promising solution.

In essence, Bowman recommended reducing the scale of the assignment and including in the course a mini-paper. He proposed that the teacher duplicate for each child two or three encyclopedia articles on a very narrow subject (Bowman's group used *the paramecium).* Working together, the group would learn notetaking skills and practice developing working thesis statements. Bowman suggested that a rigid, standardized format be required and that explicit directions be given ahead of time. The papers themselves would be so brief, however, as to allow students to write them within one class period. Recopying in final form could be done at home or during the next class period.

Bowman theorized that students need additional practice with five basic skills: (1) reading with acuity, (2) noting that sources vary on any given subject and recording these variances, (3) organizing and synthesizing findings, (4) attributing data to appropriate authorities, and (5) formulating an original conclusion. He further reasoned that his "mini-paper" assignment would reinforce these skills:

> As students develop, on a small scale, their skills in research methodology, in logical thinking, and in clear writing, they will progress into larger projects requiring extensive library research. No longer will they feel bewildered by the prospect of a term paper (Bowman, p. 36).

In implementing Bowman's mini-paper idea with my seniors last fall, I found it necessary to make at least four modifications: first, in line with my conviction that research papers should be argumentative/persuasive in nature, I chose a somewhat controversial subject — *acupuncture.* My sources included one encyclopedia article but, importantly, two less objective articles: "In Nevada, Acupuncture Finds a Place in the Sun," and "Acupuncture's Boom Goes Bust," both from *The National Observer.* I also invited a physical therapist and practicing acupuncturist to speak to the group — thus providing a fourth source of information. The two articles differed widely on the status of acupuncture as a mode of therapy in the U.S.; in fact, the arguments pro and con were so balanced within the three articles that it was possible for students to devise any number of contradictory thesis statements and still find ample support for all of them. A partial list of the theses which grew out of our initial reading and group discussion follows:

- Acupuncture is an economical pain reliever and is safe under correct medical supervision.
- Even though it is an effective pain reliever, acupuncture is obsolete.
- In the past twenty-five centuries, acupuncture has developed from a superstitious form of medicine to a sophisticated pain therapy.
- The disadvantages of acupuncture greatly outweigh its advantages.

A second, and minor, departure from Bowman's proposal involved, again, the materials I supplied. With the exception of the encyclopedia article, each source offered facts/testimony from a variety of authorities besides the author himself. I felt it was important for students to practice crediting authorities cited within the source; they are often confused on this point and cite the author himself for every bit of information borrowed from a given article.

Third, my students worked on their sentence outlines and thesis statements ahead of time. Once each student had devised a thesis he felt could be supported by the given data, he was

assigned to a four to five student group whose purpose was to discuss the thesis and plot a handful of good supporting ideas. The outline, which was an outgrowth of this group work, was assigned for homework and each outline was submitted for my comments before the student actually began writing the rough draft.

Finally, I departed from Bowman's plan by not requiring a final form paper at all. My students carried their mini-paper through the rough draft stage only. This, I thought, was far enough for the skills to be learned or reinforced. I allowed students to document sources using an abbreviated footnote form — simply crediting the author and page within the text of the paper. I also made sure that the classroom atmosphere surrounding the rough-draft writing was similarly informal. Using the process-conference idea, I circulated around the room throughout the period, answering questions, making suggestions, clarifying the task.

More formal conferences followed completion of the rough drafts. I "graded" each "Satisfactory+", "Satisfactory", "Satisfactory−", or "Unsatisfactory." Students who received "Unsatisfactory" were encouraged to rewrite at least one Roman numeral of their outline for re-evaluation. All of my "unsatisfactory" students took advantage of this revision opportunity and eventually received a "satisfactory" mark.

EVALUATION: PHASE I

In hindsight, my version of Bowman's idea had both strengths and weaknesses. As evidenced by the students' final papers, there was some significant skill improvement:

- My students proved more adept at documenting and introducing borrowed material.
- Their thesis and outline writing skills were greatly refined by the additional mini-paper exercise.
- Their introduction and conclusion writing profited tremendously from the acupuncture assignment.

But . . . my project suffered weaknesses as well. My subject was, as I see it now, too unfamiliar and too technical for some of my students. Furthermore, I provided the students with too much data; they had trouble assimilating that much information. Third, the inclusion of a guest speaker stimulated interest (He "cured" one student's headache!) to the point of completely upstaging the printed media. Because Mr. Williams and his equipment were so real, so visual, the students borrowed very heavily from his presentation and virtually ignored the periodical articles. Finally, I did not give enough attention to the notetaking process. To my great disappointment, the students' reading comprehension skills showed no marked improvement. Their papers indicated they still had difficulty identifying good supporting evidence and knowing how and when to plug it into their arguments.

PROJECT: PHASE II

Last spring I met another new class of senior research students and we again involved ourselves in a mini-paper project. The project bore great resemblance to my first mini-paper idea with the exception of four basic modifications:

- I chose a subject with which the students might have greater interest and some pre-acquaintance — state-run lotteries.
- I passed out only two articles instead of three. Both were chosen from *The Reader's Digest* and were easier to read than those from *The National Observer*.
- I invited no guest speaker — hoping to force my students to read with greater depth and dependency.
- I took extra time with the note-taking process. The class worked together to extract the important arguments and supporting evidence.

Based upon impressions, observations, student comments, and the resultant papers, I would conclude the above modifications were positive, constructive changes. The students seemed to be more confident and less confused in completing the mini-assignment, and generally less anxious about the research process.

For me and for other department members who have begun to adopt the mini-paper method, the teaching of research has acquired greater simplicity and, I think, greater integrity. We are still expecting *performance* but in a very real way we are teaching *process*.

Literature *Is* a Reason to Write

Finding meaningful ways to involve students in enough writing experiences is a challenging, desirable goal for the literature teacher. All too often, however, the dominant goal is to have students develop an appreciation for literature through intensive study and analysis of many literary selections. Whenever this is the goal, little opportunity remains in which to pursue the equally important goal of having students write.

One approach to meeting the writing challenge may be by simply combining literature and writing lessons in as many varied ways as we can. In my classroom I have found combining literature lessons with writing activities is not only very effective but also fun for both teacher and students.

Ideally the writing experiences should be challenging but well within the students' range of achievement. If the activities are oriented to student interests, then overcoming writing apprehension won't be a mammoth problem. The literature-writing activity may be as brief as a few minutes or it may be spread out over a period of a week or more of sequential activities.

Using almost any story, poem, play, folk or fairy tale, teachers and students alike will enjoy experimenting with the practical activities suggested here. They may wish to write:

- **a totally different beginning or ending.**
- **a parody of a serious story or a tragic play.**
- **a satire based on a trivial incident.**
- **a similar story or play using different or unusual characters.**
- **a poem or song that expresses or suggests the theme of a literary selection.**
- **a story or play based on the theme of a poem or song.**
- **a collection of poems dealing with the theme expressed in a literary selection (poems may be original or copied from various sources).**
- **dialog and stage directions to change a story into a stage play for student production.**
- **reversed roles for the antagonist and the protagonist or the other characters so that the story or play presents a different point of view.**
- **creating additional scenes or episodes for a play or story to reveal ideas that the author has left to the reader's imagination.**
- **eliminating certain scenes or episodes to see how their omission may alter the plot.**
- **to create a new story or play based on the original rewritten from a personal point of view.**
- **a funny story or play created from a grab bag of characters, settings and plot starters.**

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Writing as Communication

". . . writing is one of the most powerful modes of communication, because it allows us to become aware of our own thinking. Writing is our thought process made visible."

When I tried to get ideas together about writing as communication, the issues seemed to keep getting bigger and bigger and wigglier and wigglier. It's as though I started out fishing for trout but snagged the great white shark instead. I'm not altogether sure how to land it, but here goes.

First, I can't discuss what I mean by writing as communication without looking at what I mean by teaching. I make a distinction between teaching and instructing. Instructing is concerned with the process of presenting information or explaining concepts or ideas. It is instructor centered. Teaching, on the other hand, is the process of assisting students to develop their abilities to think well and independently. Teaching allows students to find a personal context for the concepts or ideas presented and encourages them to draw individual conclusions to express in some form. It is student centered. Instruction seems to have much to do with textbooks and dittoes and developing specific skills; teaching, with interaction between humans and using the skills in clear and effective thinking. Instructing might be considered a science; teaching an art. These may be oversimplified definitions and not everyone will agree that the two processes are so distinct. I include the distinction because it helps to clarify my focus. Obviously, instruction is an important part of learning, but I am primarily interested in being a good teacher.

As a teacher of writing, I have been continually frustrated by pressure from administrators, other teachers and often students, to make the instruction of grammar and mechanics the primary concern in English classes. I want to help my students use their writing to think and communicate as intelligent individuals. I want them to learn to write effectively because it helps them discover their power. At times I have done this very well, particularly when I taught a course called Composition Through Contemporary Films. More often, though, my students' writing has been "dead." They didn't emerge as real people in their writing and they didn't give a damn about it. Most of their writing was just words on paper written because I required it of them and they wanted to pass the course. In a sense, all writing communicates something, but "dead" writing communicates unintentionally; it communicates things like, "I'm bored," or "I think so little of myself that I can barely write my name." What I'm after is *intentional* communication. I want students to choose to communicate something that matters to them.

I am haunted by the question, "What did I do right?" Why did things work so well almost all the time in the writing course; why do they sometimes work well in regular English classes? It would be possible to argue, and many do, that the particular environment or situation or the specific mixture of students ultimately determines success in teaching writing. I've gone along with this kind of argument at times, usually in desperation. Yet I know that at some very basic level, it does not make sense; it is not a clear picture of reality. If I agree that these external factors determine success of failure in the teaching of writing, to the exclusion of other reasons, then I will always be limited in my ability to grow and change as a teacher. It makes more sense to me to take a positive position and assume that I have the ability to change a situation to any degree that I am willing to make the effort to gain allies and do what is needed. If I assume less, I run the risk of retreating into frustration and despair and remaining passive. I'm not denying there are real difficulties in the specific environment or with specific students. Such difficulties do exist and they need attention, but they should not form the boundaries of my chance for success in teaching writing.

So assuming that I can do something about the situation, I conclude that there must be some consistent or perhaps universal elements for the effective teaching of writing as communication. In thinking about this possibility, I remember times when my students have written in their "real" voices. The question occurs then, "What are the qualities of a 'real' voice?" For me, two qualities seem important. One is honesty. A "real" voice is honest; there is nothing "phony" about it. There is no preoccupation with impressing the teacher or trying to imitate someone else's style. The second quality of a "real" voice is the sense it conveys of being in charge. The person has something to say and speaks from personal knowledge.

Thinking about the qualities of a "real" voice leads me to three other assumptions. First, I assume that all students want to communicate. Increasingly I am convinced that it is

natural for all humans to be in charge of their worlds. That is, it is natural for humans to act powerfully to do what they want and need and to assess accurately the effects of their actions. I believe that each person, unless there is some actual damage to the forebrain, is born with the ability and the desire to act in this powerful way. I think this is true for all humans regardless of race, culture or class. A small child wanting to explore a new toy, for example, will approach it in a variety of ways using all the senses he/she can marshall confidently, until he/she comes to an understanding of it and is satisfied. Even an infant can use its voice effectively to get satisfaction of real needs. Individual and/or social distresses often interfere with a person's ability to act in the powerful way I have described, but this is an acquired condition; it is not innate. Second, I assume that communicating well is a significant part of being in charge of one's world. I believe that each human with forebrain intact, has, inherently, the ability to learn and manipulate language, which is our basic tool for communication. The physical exploration that we did as infants and young children increasingly becomes the mental exploration that we do as adults through language. Third, I assume that writing is one of the most powerful modes of communication, because it allows us to become aware of our own thinking. Writing is our thought process made visible. Like the stop action of a camera, writing lets us slow down the process and in reading back what we have written, we can reflect on our own thinking. We not only see what we have thought; we can also revise our thinking. We can have a new vision of it through our writing.

Perhaps I can illustrate what I mean by writing as a tool which empowers students by sharing an incident from one of my classes. One day, in a state of exhaustion and despair, I decided to try an exercise I had read about in *Media and Methods* magazine. When the bell rang to start the composition class, I went to the board without speaking and wrote, "I don't feel like teaching today." Then I handed the chalk to a student I was sure would understand that she was to write something on the board too. She did and handed the chalk to another student and this continued until each student had written something. At first the messages were nothing, but gradually they grew more meaningful. Real issues were raised and real communication began to happen. (The morality of bombing civilians in Vietnam and the question of whether individuals have an obligation to be concerned about what happens in the world beyond self were key issues raised.) After the last student had had a turn to write, the chalk was placed on the chalkboard. Students began to go up spontaneously, one at a time, and respond to the messages on the board. The interaction was profound. No one spoke during the entire class and I was a fascinated observer. Rhonda, a student whom I knew from personal conversation was on the verge of attempting suicide, wrote the most on the board. She responded to the key issue that an individual does have a responsibility to others. The experience of finding her voice that day in class changed her life. She wrote and spoke powerfully the rest of the semester. The class ended with the most shy, nearly illiterate boy in class writing "I love you all" just before he walked out of the room.

I can conclude from this incident and other similar experiences that students want to write and they want to write in their real voices. When this doesn't happen, I assume the student is in a state of distress, there is something unworkable about the situation, or the assignment is ineffective. When a student is upset, his/her thinking and communicating skills are affected. It is often difficult to think rationally when we are hurt, afraid, embarrassed, frustrated or bored, yet as teachers, we generally expect our students to write well no matter what their emotional or mental state. Though we cannot, as teachers, be personal counselors for every student, we can acknowledge and help our students to acknowledge the feelings they were experiencing. We can encourage them to talk about their upsets where that is safe and possible. We can also allow them to use writing as a tool to sort out their feelings.

When I think about the situations and assignments that resulted in good written communication in my classes, some elements in the teaching of writing as communication begin to emerge as important:

- It is important to provide a reasonably safe environment. This includes minimizing tension between students and teacher and between students and students. It also includes acknowledging their feelings.
- Students need to be able to find a personal context for each assignment given. They need to be able to connect what they are asked to communicate about to ideas or experiences that they already understand so there is a meaningful point of departure from which to explore and develop new thinking.
- Assignments that work well usually give a direction and set perimeters but leave a wide range for individual interpretation.
- The emphasis needs to be on process rather than product.
- Genuine appreciation of student effort is essential.
- Students want and need concrete feedback. This can be given through conferencing, group work or thoughtfully written comments.

Now, looking back at what I have written, I realize that these six elements were the organizing principles for the course Composition Through Contemporary Films, though I did not consciously think of them at the time I developed the curriculum. The content of the class was a series of "art" films, usually without dialogue, providing images, allegory or metaphor which students could interpret in terms of their own experience. There were no right or wrong answers. The content of the class provided for part of the safety also. The films and our shared responses to them, and not the teacher, became the center of the class. We were essentially peers in discussing the films. Additional safety came from the fact that students worked in small, self chosen groups to read and respond to each other's papers. Peer response was as important as teacher response.

The films themselves also provided built-in direction and perimeters for writing assignments, but students could respond to them in very personal ways and in a variety of forms. Students got a lot of feedback from each other as well as from the teacher and time was given to enjoy the papers; they weren't just handed in and graded.

In addition to written assignments in response to the films, students were asked to keep a journal. They were required to write several pages a week, but what they wrote could be private if they wished. Many students did use their journals to work out personal feelings. Sometimes they shared them with me, sometimes not. I know that the work I received from students in these classes the year and a half I taught this elective was consistently better than I have usually gotten. They wrote honestly and often powerfully.

If my thinking is accurate, then the six elements that I have cited as important to the teaching of writing as communication should be applicable to the teaching of writing in any class.

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What Does the Composition Teacher Need to Know?

During the first six months of 1979, I was in residence as a Fellow of the Iowa-NEH Institute on Writing at the University of Iowa. The purpose of this Institute was to train twenty-two Directors of Composition from colleges and universities throughout the country in the latest research on writing and the teaching of writing. The Institute program was rigorous and intensive; for six consecutive months the participants read about and talked about little else but writing and the teaching of writing, and during the final two months each of us designed experimental writing courses to take back to our home institutions. During 1979-80 I taught the two courses I designed and found teaching them exciting and rewarding.

Like many English teachers, most of my training has been in literature and I have always felt myself on shaky ground when I have had to teach writing courses. I have taught at least one section of freshman composition each semester during the thirteen years I have been at Stephen F. Austin, but I have had very little success as a composition teacher and have always felt that my weakness was that I simply did not know enough about the teaching of writing to do an effective job. Over the years I have had some rather dismal failures in my attempts to teach students how to write, so I chose to attend the Institute.

So much for motivation. Now I want to look at one of my "dismal failures." The teacher in the following little narrative was me, and the student who wrote the composition never did learn how to write — at least not in my class. I think that if I now had that student I could do a better job than I did then, and I would like to explain why I think this.

In the fall of 1977, students in a regular section of English 131 at SFA were asked to read an essay entitled "Two Cheers for Technology" by Stuart Chase. The essay was assigned because it is a classic specimen of "exemplification," and students in the class were expected to write such an essay as part of their required work. One of the possible assignments asked the students was to write a response to the question posed in paragraph five of Chase's essay:

> Is it possible to conceive of a civilized society in the 1970's without electric power, motor vehicles, railroads, airplanes, telephones, television, elevators, flush toilets, central heating, air conditioning, antibiotics, vaccines, and antiseptics?

The following is a fairly representative student composition from that assignment:

"Two Cheers for Technology"

In paragraph five of the essay entitled, "Two Cheers for Technology" the author poses the question; is possible to imagine the now civilized society of the 70's without its many luxeries.

Society progresses into a more complex style daily. New or improved methods of various products, ideas, medicines, etc. are rapidly being discovered. Most of these are to aid society; to make one more comfortable. There are products, on todays market, to make one look and feel younger. Medicines to prolong and sometime cure deathful illnesses. In our highly developed age machines operate simple products to human lives. Man is experimenting with shocking ideas, such as a program to design your own children — a child painlessly conceived from a test tube.

Explorations are all a part of society. Many will not agree with such "mind-blowing" experiments, but still as the days of time age man, man must age society. We are use to changes. When a new product is released many run to buy it, merely out of curosity. Man could not survive living day after day in the exact same atmosphere. Life in itself is one big challenge — why not make it that much more fullfilling through exploration, experimentation and discovery.

Obviously, this is a very bad piece of writing. One would suppose that if somehow a Universal Congress of Composition Teachers could be convened in order to select an archetypal "F" paper, this might very well be their choice. And yet it is by no means the worst paper written in response to that assignment. The students in that class were rather typical SFA freshmen; each of them scored somewhere between seventeen and twenty-two on the English part of the American College Test, and all of them had good high school records. The student whose paper I have quoted graduated from a large high school in a major Texas city, scored twenty on the English part of the ACT, and earned nothing but "A's" and "B's" in four years of high school English. And yet that student, like his peers, seemed to be totally helpless and inept when he was called upon to write one of the traditional kinds of papers we have always assigned in English 131. What, then, are we to do about papers such as this one?

First of all, we can mark upwards of twenty major errors in expression in this student's paper and send him scurrying to his handbook to look up the rules for the conventions of Edited American English so flagrantly violated in his paper. We can tell the student that his paper exhibits all seven (or ten, or twenty) signs of illiteracy, and that he must learn what all of them are so that he won't commit such gross errors in future papers. Further, we can tell the student that his paper lacks focus, unity, and coherence — and that it is not really an exemplification essay because he never does get around to using any specific examples. And we can carp endlessly about diction, word choice, paragraph development, punctuation, control of generalizations, etc., and can insist that the student do proper penance in the Writing Lab or in a remedial text until he is sure that he will sin no more. And finally we can go back over the Chase essay until we are absolutely sure that the student fully understands what a real exemplification essay looks like.

The traditional composition courses at SFA have long been essentially product-oriented, and the chief pedagogical strategy employed in them has been teaching rhetorical options and strategies through study, analysis, and imitation of sample pieces of writing in which those options and strategies are successfully employed. In other words, we have assumed tacitly that students can learn, through a kind of osmosis, how to produce specific kinds of essays for specific kinds of occasions if only they will imitate specimens of essays produced by professional writers. And we have assumed that any problems a student might have in grammar, punctuation, mechanics, spelling, diction, and syntax can similarly be corrected through study of the appropriate rules

and imitation of models.

Furthermore, it is true, we have assumed that the chief (if not the only) audience for student compositions is the instructor, and that he or she serves as a kind of judge whose chief functions are those of (a) informing the student how each of his compositions stacks up against the abstract ideal of the perfect (or at least effective) exemplification essay or five-paragraph theme; and (b) placing appropriate marks on the student's paper to indicate where and how it falls short of the similar ideal of Edited American English. The basic premise behind this string of assumptions is that students need to learn to imitate proper forms and achieve correctness.

However, if we adopt a different premise, that good writing involves mastery of a process of communication rather than of the forms and skills necessary for an acceptable product, then we are more likely to teach students how to write. Let us look now at how our sample student composition would be handled in an experimental section of English 131 like the one designed at the Iowa-NEH Institute.

The sample composition would receive an "F" in an experimental section, just as it would in a traditional section. Evaluation and judgment of student compositions are absolutely essential steps, and it is obvious that the writing skills of the student stand in need of remediation. Any student who produces gems such as "medicines to prolong and sometime cure deathful illnesses" or "as the days of time age man, man must age society" needs to be told that he has produced drivel. However, in an experimental section the instructor would be concerned primarily with the process rather than the product itself and consequently the diagnosis of the student's problem and the process of remediation would differ from that given in a traditional section. Contemporary rhetorician W. Ross Winterowd has made the following comment about the relationship between process and product in traditional English classes:

> Most frequently, the writing produced for classes is viewed as product: discussion centers around the produced essay . . . [but] equal emphasis should be placed on the process. How did the piece of discourse get produced? How did the writer generate his ideas? (*Contemporary Rhetoric*, p. 33.)

Thus, the instructor would place on the sample composition comments to focus attention upon the issues implicit in the questions which Winterowd poses.

Obviously, if the student viewed the assignment as one that called for nothing more or less than an exercise in the mechanical imitation of ideal form, then the method he chose to complete it was appropriate. If students believe that they have been told merely to imitate the form of the exemplification essay as illustrated by the model of a skilled professional writer such as Chase, grotesque unintentional parodies such as our sample composition will be produced inevitably. However, in experimental sections of English 131 students will be taught never to view any assignment as calling for mere imitation, and therefore the instructor would need to indicate clearly to the student that his first and fundamental error was that he failed to understand what he was asked to do. Therefore, the instructor might comment as follows: "Your purpose in writing this paper seems to have been merely to produce a paper rather than to engage in a real act of written communication, and therefore what you have produced is totally unacceptable"; or, "In this paper nobody speaks to no one about nothing in a non-language."

By placing an "F" and some such comment on the paper, the instructor would thus take the first step in a process of diagnosis and remediation. But the process would hardly be complete. The student who received a failing grade, accompanied by what he would probably regard as a cryptic or arcane comment, might conclude, "The teacher doesn't like my style [!] of writing," or "All I got on my theme was a big 'F' and some silly Ph.D. talk!" And he would be justified if the process of diagnosis and remediation stopped at this point. However, in an experimental section the next step would be *workshopping*, first some sample student compositions, and then the assignment itself. But before we discuss that step we need briefly to consider why and how workshopping can serve as an effective tool.

The most obvious advantage to workshopping is that it makes the whole class the potential audience for student compositions. This is very important because if the student knows that his peers may read and evaluate his work he will be more likely really to try to communicate rather than to engage in a sterile academic exercise. And when he hears his paper discussed by the whole class and sees that there is general agreement that he has failed to communicate effectively, he will be much more motivated to learn from his mistakes and to improve his written work than he otherwise might be. In short, if we assume that good writing is an intensely human activity, then the workshopping of student papers can be viewed as one effective way to expand and enrich the human environment in which writing must take place. One of the many things wrong with the composition I have shared with you is that there does not seem to be a real human being speaking in it. I think here of a Kurt Vonnegut novel in which one character says of another, "I could carve a better man than that out of a banana." A "man carved out of a banana" might speak like my student did in that paper, but it is hard to imagine a genuine human being doing so.

What is actually involved in workshopping? First, the teacher must prepare carefully, and this begins with selection. It is important to select both good and bad responses so that students can see how the assignment was both effectively and ineffectively handled. The workshopping session should not produce merely a list of errors and pitfalls, but should provide an understanding of strategies for satisfactorily completing a given theme assignment. For example, if the teacher selects three compositions with good introductions and three with poor ones, it should be possible to bring the students to see that good introductions have certain characteristics, and thus general principles for effective writing can be inferred. And as the teacher selects and prepares the papers for workshopping, it becomes evident what the students' needs are and what the topics for class discussion related to those needs should be. Finally, the teacher should encourage the students to see those needs for themselves. I would hope that, had my student who wrote the wretched essay had his paper workshopped, he would have seen that what he needed to do was to throw it away and try again. I am not saying that workshopping student compositions will or can provide an instant panacea for student writing problems, but it certainly does make more sense as a teaching strategy than does the traditional process of marking major errors and assigning students to periods of penance in a handbook.

Consequently I can say the workshopping of student compositions is the most productive feature of the experimental courses I designed at Iowa.

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Teaching Composition to Chicano Students

Although the distinguishing characteristics of people marked by mental or physical impairment, cultural differences, or even the gift of genius may vary greatly, most of these disparate qualities cause, each in its own manner, an identical effect when an individual enters a conventional classroom. In most cases, the effect is negative rather than positive.

The main purpose of this paper is to indicate how differences among learners do not have to be viewed exclusively as deficiencies. Too often, instructors see the "non" as "none" in terms of "non-native speakers," "non-standard dialect," or "non-traditional student." The circumstances of statistically deviant learners do not always serve as barriers to students — in fact, often such factors exist as barriers primarily to instructors, who are unaccustomed to dealing with such situations.

The students, of necessity, are long practiced in coping and utilizing whatever capacities they have when motivated to do so. Teachers are, therefore, encouraged to develop curriculum materials to which students from a minority culture can apply the resources of their own experiences in learning the basic techniques of expository writing.

Described here is a unit on teaching Chicano students the organizing patterns of definition, classification, and illustration with the use of selections from *Texas Monthly* on menudo, ice houses, and norteña music — none of which can be adequately translated in a word or two. Although these specific selections are presented with detailed pedagogical commentary, the purpose of this article is not to advocate *Texas Monthly* as a classroom reader, but, rather, to indicate a basic teaching strategy.

The discussion is permeated by this instructor's conviction that questions relating to the form and dynamics of expository patterns, the effectiveness of figurative language, and the overall power of rhetorical devices are not determined by content or subject matter. The strengths of this model reside mainly in the undoubtedly engaging effect of the subject matter on Chicano students — most of whom have eaten menudo and heard *música norteña* all their lives but have never encountered them in a classroom — and almost equally on the colorful prose style of *Texas Monthly*.

These strengths are displayed clearly in "Dining Out: Great Bowls of Fire," which appeared in *Texas Monthly*, December 1974. Pat Perini dramatically initiates his discussion of menudo as follows:

> Every great peasant culture has a magnificent restorative stew of humble origin and ingredient. The French rely on potage St. Germain, Hungarians and other Central Europeans on their cabbage soup, Greeks on their white bean soup, and Mexicans on their menudo. Once the mainstay of the poor, these lowly soups have all been elevated to beloved national specialties.

Readers will note that Perini, like most effective writers, supplements his general definition with supportive devices, as example and even a touch of hyperbole.

Having established a somewhat elevated, almost rhapsodic, tone to reflect the high esteem with which this humble concoction is valued, in the next paragraph, Perini offers a more precise description of ingredients and cooking process: "Menudo is a wonderfully aromatic soup made of tripe, chili, and hominy, and stewed for hours with garlic and oregano." His description appeals to a variety of senses, while the succeeding line rings with the moving rhythm of exact parallelism of sound and sense: "The broth is rich, red, peppery, picante, and glistens with fat. It piques the senses, warms the insides, and clears the head."

The somewhat elaborate ceremony with which menudo and its numerous condiments is served is outlined as a process — only the truly knowledgeable will miss mention of the tortillas, absolutely *de rigor* with such fare! The following paragraph narrates the customary circumstances of a classic menudo feast:

> Traditionally eaten in the wee hours after a night on the town, menudo is heralded as an antidote for hangovers. And because Saturday has always been a big night out, menudo has become a Sunday morning rite. Mexicans brag about menudo's goodness, about how the hot broth with its medicinal condiments, particularly the chili, replenishes vitamins A and C, soothes the stomach, and stimulates the gastric juices to overcome any loss of appetite.

While Perini's article goes on to other points, including the etymology of menudo, this review of the first four paragraphs shows how fruitful the approach might be. Here Chicano students have a rare opportunity to encounter and explore a familiar experience with the tools and terms of standard expository prose. While such a meeting of the internal world of intimate cultural experience with the formal apparatus of composing techniques may not trigger instant results, it surely encourages a deeper level of personal involvement than often is possible with standard textbook materials.

A particularly interesting dimension of Perini's analysis lies in his concern to convey some sense of the emotional or psychological significance of menudo along with an objective definition of its features. Class discussion might focus on isolating those parts of the article that depict the subjective rather than objective aspect. Writing assignments might encourage students to attempt similar pieces that impart the personal values attached to an item, in addition to its material identity.

Like Perini, Richard West merits more than just routine analysis of both his subject and his treatment of it. "Keeping It on Ice," from the August 1976 *Texas Monthly*, a short and appealing sketch, is, in effect, an abbreviated essay of classification. The general category might be said to be

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evoked rather than detailed, and numerous sub-types are listed in a slightly cursory although orderly mention of parallel factors. However, West creatively applies an almost petrified formula to a very vital aspect of Texas and *tejano* experience and brings it to life.

"Keeping It on Ice" begins with West's category of sites of "traditional recreation" in the state of Texas. He says, "All over Texas, beer drinkers and domino players, socializers and pool players quaff, play, talk, and chalk-up. But the atmosphere where traditional recreation takes place can vary widely, depending on where you are." The following sentences present variations of this main category. Each site seems to be marked by cultural and, often, racial, characteristics and then further distinguished by the peculiar qualities of its food, drink, and music. For example, "East Texas blacks drink their Buds in the 'Double Seven Club' listening to a loud jukebox playing Al Green or Tower of Power hits . . . . Anglos choose the ubiquitous Texas beer joint: dark, musty, and dangerous; a hideout for Tammy and George wondering why good love turned bad."

Finally, West focuses on his major topic — the ice houses or ice stations of westside San Antonio. He explains them as "combination grocery stores /beer joints/restaurants with game rooms and occasionally a service station thrown in." In addition to noting the typical presence of "high-octane" menudo and "moralistic" corrido music, West observes: "Women come only with families, usually drinking outside with the kids playing among the picnic tables . . . . The ice house is a male dominated outpost in the metropolitan jungle."

While there are numerous pedagogical approaches that seem especially attractive for use with Chicano students — from study of the enticing variety of new vocabulary items such as "quaff," "imbibing" with its echoes of the Spanish verb *beber* (to drink), and "Baedeker" to introduction or review of those language patterns by which words like patio, cantina, and adobe became incorporated into American English — initial discussion might be narrowed to two main points. First, students might isolate the major category described and note the nature and variety of sub-species, the German beer bar or South Texas cantina, for example. Second, students might speculate why West chose this approach for his specific subject, the westside San Antonio ice house. This second question moves students to a critical consideration relevant to understanding all expository patterns. That is, they might judge how and why one particular organizing pattern might be more effective than another. Like Perini, West succeeds in describing a particular reality, while also establishing its genuine social or personal worth to the people for whom it is a part of a way of life. West's brief discussion not only fixes a specific image of how an ice house might look in the mind of the reader, but also, and possibly more important, creates a sure sense of what an ice house represents in the varigated social patterns of our national experience.

Like the works of both Pat Perini and Richard West, Chet Flippo's consideration of Texas border music is imbued with empathy for his subject, the people, and the social history it reflects. In "Tortilla Flats" from the June 1975 *Texas Monthly*, Chet Flippo initially defines *música norteña* fairly simply as "essentially the music of the Texas-Mexico border, although it's spread beyond that." Flippo analyzes his topic by examining examples of this unique musical form. His catalogue of well-known performers is laced with observations about the personal ordeals and professional struggles often exacted for commercial success.

Flippo's article begins with a brief examination of a performer known throughout the Southwest today, Freddy Fender. Originally named Baldemar Huerta, Fender's surrender to the demands of the marketplace is symbolized for Flippo in two versions of what the music critic terms Fender's "classic rocker" — "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights." The first (1973, Houston) recording is praised as a "masterpiece of churning and urgent Texas rock," while a later ABC-LP is "tame." Like Freddy Fender, Johnny Rodriguez is said to have capitulated to the diluting predilections of a national market. Flippo asserts that "recent releases are virtually unrecognizable from his earlier, stronger material." Flippo's attention finally turns to an artist who most graphically illustrates the musical and social saga of this Tex-Mex border phenomenon, *música norteña*.

Joe Hernandez enjoys fame in the Hispanic Southwest as the leader of a group called "Little Joe and La Familia." In his assessment, Flippo remarks on the varying styles evident in Little Joe's music and lists some of the selections heard in a performance to demonstrate his point — "a Mexican cumbia with clarinets and flugelhorn solos, western polkas led by a driving brass section and organ, and waltzes broken up by blues guitar solos."

Just as Little Joe's *música norteña* is perceived as a kind of compendium of musical styles, so is Little Joe himself a combination of Chicano and Anglo cultural influences. Referring to a few significant details, Flippo generalizes on the heterogeneous nature of Little Joe's entire operation. He comments on an Anglo/Chicano ambivalence: "Spanish lapses into English, then back again. Some nights the band's totally 'La Familia,' performing only Chicano songs. Other nights it's Little Joe, playing tight, brassy American pop with a heavy Mexican influence." Elaborating on this aspect of the artist's performance, Flippo maintains focus on his stipulated topic, music. But, he is also sensitive to the psychological and social dimensions of his subject, as were Perini and West.

Because of his effective use of example, Flippo's penetrating review of Tex-Mex border music is intelligible to almost any audience. Discussion questions might be directed toward points relating to the performers cited by the author, and later extend to others possibly familiar to the class. Some discussion might consider the extent to which Flippo implies that mass marketing diminishes the cultural or ethnic identity of the music as well as its stylistic integrity. Writing assignments generated from the selection might suggest a similar approach be applied to other comparable musical forms, such as folk music, salsa, or even rock.

In order to alleviate an unhealthly learning situation, cures or changes may be directed in two directions: one, toward the student; and two, toward any component of the teaching/learning situation — such as personnel, curriculum, curriculum materials, building design and facilities. This discussion has been directed toward the development and use of curriculum materials that, on the one hand, appeal to the special knowledge of students from a Chicano cultural background in the Southwest and, on the other hand, display and reflect the goals and principles of basic composition and rhetoric. Non-traditional curriculum materials can serve to bridge the gap between the experiences and knowledge of a special student and the polished prose of textbook models.

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An Opening Writing Sequence

For years, on Opening Day of the Public Education Season, instead of reading the rules and regulations, grading and expectations, I've taken my senior high classes out of the room to "look toward the Cascade Mountains" from the second floor of McNary High School in Salem or gone outside to "look west toward the hills" in Central Point. I ask my students to take notes and gather information for a paragraph describing "what you see." After a few minutes we return to class to write for about ten minutes. Then I collect the papers, shuffle them, shove mine in somewhere and read them all aloud on the spot, commenting positively on each as I go, stressing such things as methods of organization (foreground to distance, far to near, sky to ground), clear, unique images, details, metaphors, selectivity. I mention how each of the writings is different even though everyone looked the same direction. It's easy to find something worthy of comment about every paragraph.

Here are three unedited examples from McNary High School students:

A white little rabbit floating across the sky quickly turns into scattered pieces. The line of clouds over a jagged line of trees fades into roads, buildings, and moving cars. Telephone poles and lines are connected throughout the picture. An open field of grass brings emptiness to the half crowded view.

I'd say, "I like some verbs in here. Verbs like "floating," "turns," "fades," are very active and move the description. Nice metaphor of the rabbit. We know it's a cloud; she doesn't have to tell us."

Looking out the window about two stories up from the ground I saw many inches of grass, trees, bushes and dirt. There were many fences and the back views of homes. Farther away than anything else, there were many cars going fast and swift, some going one way the others the opposite as the sun shined on them brightly.

"Very nicely organized. The author places herself squarely 'looking out the window,' begins in the foreground and takes us back. She has many details and her last sentence sounds like an ending."

Cascades, the wall that divides the east from the valley. Today it's covered with a thick fog. You can barely see its outline. Sometimes I wonder if it's still there, but when I reach it it hasn't moved. It just sits there dormant.

"You notice in this one the author selects one thing — the mountains — and stays with it. Nice beginning of the Cascades as a wall separating 'the east from the valley.' A nice feel to the description."

I take twenty to thirty minutes to read and comment on the writings. Later I have students read their own writings to the class, but this first time I read them for speed and to avoid forcing them to read to the class on the first day. I start them in small groups first.

Besides stressing, observing and selecting, this first day assignment shows students that the teacher is serious about writing, serious enough that he had them write instead of talking at them. And he wrote along with them. By reading aloud and commenting, the teacher showed them that they could write something another person would read, enjoy, and respond to honestly.

Next, I use transparencies of some "Cascade" or "Central Point" paragraphs with wordiness and short choppy sentences and we examine a couple as a class, revising for economy, better verbs and sentences. To prevent embarrassment, I use paragraphs from the previous year or use anonymous writings from one class as samples in another.

Using a third sample, they revise in pairs or alone and read some of their revisions. The follow up is a homework assignment to describe any moving thing, working to use active verbs and long sentences. To ensure my request, I ask that the descriptions be at least three sentences, total at least thirty-five words, and include no "to be" verbs. This is a fairly prescriptive assignment, I know, but it's clear to the students what I'm looking for, and, except for occasional padding, they produce it. In small groups the next day, students read the homework assignment, checking for the criteria and choosing two or more to read to the class. (Students who didn't do the homework — common where I teach — write the paragraph during group work, and miss out on the benefit and credit for the group activity.)

Also that day, I begin class with the first Notebook writing — free writing. This is the first of many short Notebook assignments made up of free writings, focused free writings (usually focused on what we're reading or talking about in class), paragraph and sentence responses to literature, films, events of the time. I ask for volunteers to read whenever we write in the Notebooks, but I do not read them myself. While they write, I browse around and put a check in my gradebook for those who fulfill the assignment (e.g., a page on a free writing, a sentence if I've asked for a sentence). At various times in the term I ask them to choose and develop an idea from a Notebook free or focused writing, and at the end of the term I count at their tables the number of writings, and then assign grades.

About this time I also begin sentence combining exercises from William Strong's *Sentence Combining: A Composing Book* (Random House), perhaps opening with "Water Skier" because it ties in with the students' "active" writings and will reinforce using active verbs. I continue to use sentence combining regularly, nearly always with small groups so they will say and hear the options and then write them on large sheets of paper with felt-tipped pens or on transparencies. I also use sentence combining exercises to lead into writing assignments, but these

assignments come later.

Next, I may have them read a short story, very likely Ray Bradbury's "Kaleidoscope" from *The Illustrated Man*, because it's still interesting to me, to the students, has characters easy to discuss and describe, and ideas worth talking about. And, of course, I assign writing about it. One assignment is to list each character and describe in a word or two his response to floating in space doomed to die (Applegate — bitter, Stimson — panicked, etc.). The other assignment, a Moffett Interior Monologue, can come before or after they read the story. "Imagine you are floating in space, alone, with enough oxygen for a few hours, with no chance of being rescued. Write what is going through your mind." These writings are often thoughtful and poignant, well worth sharing with the class.

After that, it's time for another leaving the room exercise, this time to the gym or track field or football field to write about some activity. Then it's back to the classroom to write and share the paragraphs, stressing good verbs, good sentences, how different writers select different things to write about even though they're all at the same scene. The next writing is about a short film like *The Refiner's Fire* or *The Hand* that forces students to make an interpretation.

In teaching writing one thing leads to another. I have in mind where I want to go and some of the writing to have my students do to get there, but I can't always plan the next step until I see the writings. I have to be receptive to where the writings take me — to revision, to a related assignment, to sentence work, to a story. But the above sequence, while it cannot be followed slavishly, introduces early what I want to emphasize in teaching writing: observing and writing about literature; in summary, making writing public, serious and positive.

The Audience Counts

The process of using language is dynamic, not static. It is an interactive one, involving both the writer and an audience or interpreter. The writer, carrying a set of meanings in his or her head, sends a message coded in symbols or words to an interpreter. The interpreter, who also has his own set of meanings, either understands the meaning implied by the message, or does not. If something takes place as a result of the writer's message, whether overt or covert action, if there is a reaction of some kind, then communication has taken place. Consequently, written communication is largely dependent upon the experiences, meanings, and reactions of the interpreter or audience. Knowledge, then, about his interpreter or reader will help the writer make decisions about his purpose, subject, support, and diction in writing.

First of all, identification of the audience can facilitate the writer's task by helping him select a topic. As a novice teacher, I gave little or no help to students during the writing process. I would say, "Give me a fully developed essay with a clear thesis on a topic of your choice." And the students would reply, almost in unison, "I don't know what to write about." Had I helped them by specifying an audience, then they could have asked themselves, "Will my audience have any experiences, real or vicarious, that are similar to mine to draw upon?" This question would have provided the direction they needed.

A specified audience can also simplify the act of writing by helping the writer determine the nature of the content. A description of a circus clown might be quite appropriate for an audience of fifth graders whereas an explanation of the complexity of a circus clown's job might appeal to high school juniors and seniors. Knowledge about his interpreter's interest and knowledge can also help the writer decide how many examples are necessary for support or whether statistics should be included.

Most importantly, consideration of the interpreter controls the very symbols or words the writer or messenger uses. The decision must be made whether a particular word or phrase will evoke the wrong set of meanings the interpreter has in mind. An awareness, then, of how important audience is in writing and the development of skill in making decisions about what is writing based on knowledge of the audience will make the act of writing all the more clear and all the less painful for the beginning writer.

How does a teacher go about presenting the concept of audience or interpreter as an integral part of the writing process? The concept, I think, can be demonstrated in a variety of ways. Allow students to analyze well-known television commercials, magazine advertisements, and military recruitment brochures, deciding who the intended audience is and what effect the audience has had on the piece of writing. Then have them individually, or in groups, compose similar items with a specific audience in mind. Or engage them in role-playing. For instance, ask them to pretend discussing a paper that they feel was unfairly graded, first with a good friend and then with the teacher. But most of all, engage them in reading their rough drafts aloud to an interpreter, including reading to themselves, and providing input. Innovative teachers will be able to think of many more ways to demonstrate the concept.

Emphasis is now placed on the dependence of the interpreter during the process of writing. It is the input from the interpreter that controls what a writer should or should not say and the symbols or words he should use. One of the primary objectives of the teacher of writing, then, is to make students cognizant of the vital relationship of writer and audience in written language.

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Speaking Your Writing:

A Rehearsal Technique for the Basic Writing Student

In his article, "Write Before Writing" (CCC 1978), Donald Murray introduces the concept of rehearsal for writing, suggesting that pre-writing is an integral aspect of the writing process which precedes a first draft. In most classrooms, the rehearsal technique for writing is, simply, writing. Students put words on paper via outlines, writing through a draft, or free-writing. This technique is certainly helpful for many writers; however, rehearsing through writing simply does not work for all students, particularly for students coming out of an oral culture. Unfamiliar with the process of composition, nontraditional students become mired in the early stages of writing. Facing the blank page, they often experience difficulty translating ideas and feelings to the written mode which they might easily express in the oral mode. Even when they are able to commit their ideas to paper, these students experience difficulty developing and organizing their thoughts in a logical and coherent manner.

Teachers of basic skills face the overriding question: how can nontraditional students experience the writing process, especially pre-writing, in a way which is supportive, interesting, and challenging? The answer is found in the student's oral tradition of communication. Specifically, we recommend speaking as a rehearsal technique for writing.

The concept of rehearsal is certainly not new to anyone in theater. One rehearses — practices — for the theatrical performance. However, the concepts of rehearsal and performance may well be new to teachers of composition. The notion of rehearsal suggests the preparation over time in which an actor may paraphrase, question, and speak the lines of the text, attempting to fully develop a character; similarly, a writer may talk through ideas about a topic and ask questions to fully develop a thesis. In both cases, the rehearsal technique stresses speaking as a way to formulate ideas. The final performance results in a communicative situation with an audience. The actor performs the part orally before people actually present, whereas a writer performs on paper for an implicit audience of readers.

Our concept of speaking as a rehearsal technique for writing centers around social involvement. One of the discomforts which beginning writers experience is that the process is usually presented as a lonely activity. In contrast, when using speaking as a prewriting method, they are not tackling the task by themselves. Rather, they are talking out ideas with someone else, a supportive other who can listen, ask questions, elicit ideas, and offer feedback on those ideas. Just as actors contemplate their roles away from rehearsal, students may be asked to do some reflecting on the topic at home, but the possibilities for developing their ideas, as the possibilities for developing a character, are enlarged when they discuss the topic with others.

The speak-write rehearsal technique offered here is a step-by-step procedure which gradually moves students from speaking to writing. To illustrate this process, we will refer throughout to J.R., a model "speak-write" student. J.R. came into the office one day with an assignment to write a paper about his neighborhood. Like many students, his initial response was one of discouragement. "I don't have anything to say on this topic," he insisted. "Not only that, but it doesn't interest me." Also like many students, J.R. found it easier to talk about his neighborhood than to write about it. Yet throughout the process of talking through his ideas with someone else, J.R. discovered, much to his amazement, that he did have plenty to say, and he even had a structure to say it in. What follows are the concrete steps used with J.R. to discuss the topic, steps which comprise the speak-write rehearsal technique.

1. TALKING IT OUT

Following the opener, "Why don't you start by telling me what your paper is about," J.R. began to discuss his neighborhood. He remembered some of the buildings — city hall, fire station, various apartment buildings — and some events that might happen there, such as robberies and muggings. (J.R. was very much a street kid.) He also recalled sounds — sirens, screams of neighbors quarreling, high heels clacking on the floor above his apartment. Too, he mentioned the university twelve blocks from his home. J.R. began to realize that he actually did have something to say on the topic.

We call this the "Talking It Out" stage. It values and encourages the student's full exploration of all thoughts and feelings the topic arouses. When students like J.R. attempt to capture in writing the myriad ideas and emotions passing through their consciousnesses, at times they lose their train of thought or become bogged down in the mechanics of transferring the thought from head to hand. An oral approach seems best suited to capturing the spontaneous reactions to the subject. The student is able to move through many thoughts quickly. Tape recording the session or using a partner enables the student to retrieve the ideas. During this brainstorming phase, the student talks through as many ideas about the topic as possible, without evaluation.

2. FINDING A THESIS OR PURPOSE

Next comes a procedure to isolate a key idea or approach to the topic. Once J.R. realized that he did know something about the topic, he was able to move on to this stage. With some prodding, he decided to use as his central purpose "a description of my neighborhood." In that way, he felt he could best pull together the most important details he had just remembered. He could use the places and noises of his neighborhood, which seemed to be his key material.

This phase of the speak-write process involves narrowing the student's experience of the topic. By playing back the tape or discussing the ideas with a teacher or student partner, the student can list possible theses for the paper. When reviewing the list, the student might ask these questions: What area of this topic most interests me? What aspect of this topic will be most interesting to an

audience? What aspect of the topic do I appear to have the most information about? What are some possible thesis statements I could use? At this point, a thesis statement can be recorded.

3. ORGANIZING AND ELABORATING ON IDEAS

J.R. was now asked to consider how he might organize his various details. He settled on things he saw, things he heard, and a summary paragraph giving his reactions to what he saw and heard. He explored the sights and sounds inside and outside his apartment building. By discussing the location of various buildings in his area and the proximity of his own apartment to school and civic centers, he discovered something he had not previously been fully aware of: that he liked some important features about his neighborhood. Although he disliked the apartment sounds of quarreling and the street sounds which disturbed his studying, he did value the location and appearance of some neighborhood buildings. By the time he left the office, he realized not only that he had something to say and was able to organize his thoughts, but also that he had some interest in the topic.

This third phase then elaborates and organizes ideas which relate to the thesis statement. With a definite focus, the student once again talks through the ideas. Recording the interaction allows freedom to ponder thoughts. After this discussion, the student may play back the tape or discuss with a partner. The student then selects key ideas and writes them down in sentence form. Under each main idea, the student notes supporting points. (To allow the student to concentrate on generating and organizing ideas, it may be advisable at times for the partner to do the recording.) The student now has a rough outline for an oral or written presentation.

4. PRESENTING THE PAPER: RECOGNIZING THE AUDIENCE (optional)

The rehearsal strategy with J.R. stopped at step three. Working in the classroom, an additional step is possible before the student writes a first draft. That step, an optional one, entails giving a short oral presentation to others from the outline developed in step three. In presenting ideas orally to others, the student obtains feedback on the content and organization of the paper. If the audience asks for a paraphrase of the theme or for a list of the main ideas, the speaker will recognize the need to work on a clearer purpose statement, more exact topic sentences, and transitions. Questions from the audience may help to clarify problem areas. By speaking the writing, the student becomes aware of audience — the readers of the paper. Just as speakers must present their ideas logically and clearly to an audience, so, too, must writers compose logically and coherently for their audience.

5. WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT

The student is now ready to write the first draft of the paper, using the feedback obtained in stage four and the material generated in the earlier stages.

The rehearsal process is not a substitute for lessons concerning sentences, paragraphs, and diction. The speak-write model focuses on generating ideas (content) and ordering the material (organization). Students will still be expected to learn and apply the conventions of writing and must not be led to believe that transcribing their verbal responses is sufficient.

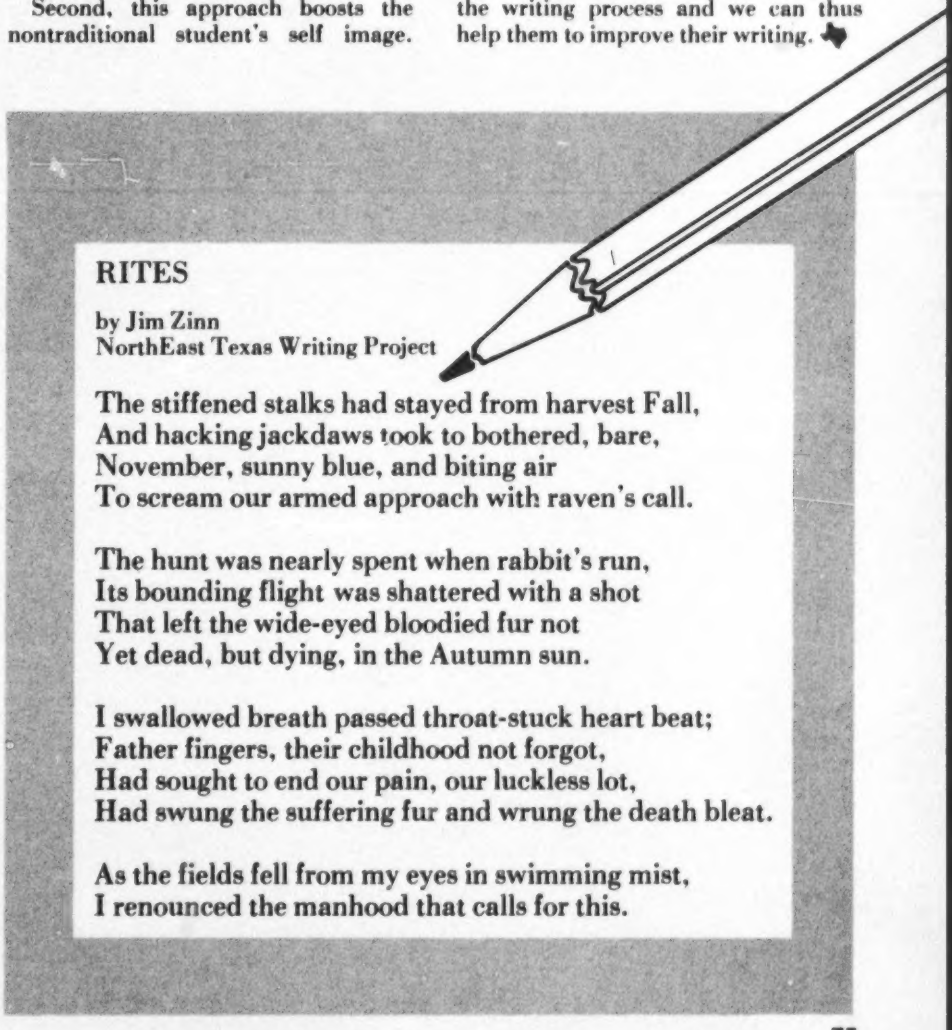
But such applications of the conventions will come in revising and editing stages, not in a rehearsal or pre-writing stage. In fact, a sixth stage requires the student to read the composed draft aloud to a partner, group, or oneself. Here, the student listens to the composition, looks for organizational flaws, and raises the same kinds of questions as those raised in phase four. Beyond such questions for revision come editing concerns. Work with a tape recorder or partner can be of much use here in capturing grammatical, spelling, and punctuation lapses.

Several other advantages likewise recommend this approach. First, this systematic procedure emphasizes composition as a process. Although the speaking and writing interchange requires a period of time, nontraditional students, especially novice writers, begin to understand the step-by-step course which leads to the final paper. The emphasis becomes, not the written product, but rather the process by which the paper emerged.

Second, this approach boosts the nontraditional student's self image. These students have not had much success in the educational system. In this instance, the students' personal experiences are held in esteem. As they express themselves, students make their choices regarding content and organization and begin to feel better about their ability to write. They experience the writing process as something no longer to be dreaded. It is not a lonely task which they must perform closeted away in their own rooms; rather, it becomes a social encounter. Instead of a work-oriented project, it becomes a playful, creative experience. Also, the possibilities for generating more ideas and supporting details are multiplied.

Finally, the speak-write strategy underscores the concept of audience. Students, through their oral presentations, experience the discourse (oral and written) as a shared event. The objective of the composing process becomes communication.

By using oral techniques we can help our students in the pre-writing stage of the writing process and we can thus help them to improve their writing.



RITES

by Jim Zinn
NorthEast Texas Writing Project

The stiffened stalks had stayed from harvest Fall,
And hacking jackdaws took to bothered, bare,
November, sunny blue, and biting air
To scream our armed approach with raven's call.

The hunt was nearly spent when rabbit's run,
Its bounding flight was shattered with a shot
That left the wide-eyed bloodied fur not
Yet dead, but dying, in the Autumn sun.

I swallowed breath passed throat-stuck heart beat;
Father fingers, their childhood not forgot,
Had sought to end our pain, our luckless lot,
Had swung the suffering fur and wrung the death bleat.

As the fields fell from my eyes in swimming mist,
I renounced the manhood that calls for this.

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Instruction First, Writing Later

I am totally at odds with English teachers who subscribe to the laissez-faire philosophy in the teaching of composition. Among those teachers who subscribe to this philosophy are Richard Friedrich and Elizabeth McPherson both of whom argued that, because pupils can and do write well, there is little need for formal instruction:

> [Resolved: that] we try to remove the impression that writing is a matter of 'getting it right,' . . . [that since] past experience has given most of our students . . . the notion that they're 'bad in English' [which resulted in their being] afraid to write because someone has convinced them that they can't, [we will make it] our main job to eradicate that impression . . . ("English at Forest Park Community College" in *College English*, 35:8 [May 1974], p. 886).

It seems to me that continued adherence to such pedagogical philosophy can only render our already chaotic situation much more so. In fact, it is this very philosophical stance which has led to the pitiful literacy condition in which students now find themselves — their inability to read, speak, or write well.

Most teachers would agree that our students do not write well and, consequently, are in need of formal instruction before, during, and after writing; though they would sharply disagree about the form this instruction should take. I would like to submit that we adopt the deductive-inductive sequence of writing instruction, and in doing so compare the process of learning to write well to that of learning to speak well.

A young child receives auditory linguistic stimuli from parents, relatives, and admirers; from these stimuli he generalizes, practices, and is corrected (hopefully) by the very sources of the stimuli. From these corrections he again generalizes, practices, and is once more corrected and the process is repeated until language has been mastered. This is the deductive-inductive process in that some sort of pre-instruction has been received. It is true that this instruction received at first is unplanned (the corrections are not); nevertheless, instruction it is; and we should note that, without it, the learner would have had no linguistic base upon which to build. Likewise, he who must learn to write well must first be exposed to visual linguistic stimuli — the written word — from which he may generalize, practice, err, and, as a consequence, receive corrective instruction from his reader(s). In spite of the difference between the forms of stimuli, most educators would concur that these linguistic developmental patterns are strikingly similar. My suggestion that parents and teachers take students in hand and lead them, step by step, through this process is made on the basis of this affinity.

But it is upon this very affinity that James Moffett, if I read him correctly, has constructed an opposing argument, an argument in favor of the inductive-deductive sequence — with emphasis upon the trial-and-error, followed by correction, pattern the young (language) learner uses:

> The trial and error sounds to many people like a haphazard, time-consuming business, a random behavior of children, animals, and others who don't know any better. . . . Trial and error is by definition never sterile, but without help the individual alone may not think of all the kinds of trials that are possible, or may always see how to learn the most from his errors. . . . The teacher does not try to prevent the learner from making errors. He does not preteach the problems and solutions. . . . The learner simply plunges into the assignment, uses all his resources, makes errors where he must, and heeds the feedback. In this action-response learning, errors are valuable; they are essential learning instruments. They are not despised or penalized. Inevitably, the child who is afraid to make mistakes is a retarded learner, no matter what the activity in question (James Moffett, *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, 1968, p. 199).

Moffett repudiates the deductive-inductive "instruction first" method:

> There is no evidence that preteaching general facts and theories about how people use language will help a student learn how to write. . . . Since the most natural assumption should be that one learns to write by writing, the burden of proof is on those who advocate the indirect method, by which I mean presenting codification about rhetoric and composition in the hope that students will apply them (*Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, p. 204).

I do agree with Moffett that students learn by doing; however, learning to write is a unique process of language learning: the propensity to learn the spoken language is inherent, as we all know. Not so with writing. It is the last and least likely linguistic skill to be learned, let alone mastered. I must agree also that, given enough time, many students may learn to write on their own; but most of them lack that indomitable spirit necessary to overcome such a handicap. Most students must be taught; and they must be instructed as quickly, effectively, and as economically as possible. Moffett's inductive-deductive method is fine for the blabbering infant for two reasons: (1) as long as he is normal and lives in society, he is bound to learn the language — man is a speaking animal; (2) he has all the time at his disposal. In fact, he has much more time than he will ever need since a normal child will

have mastered the spoken word long before entry into the elementary school; hence, there is enough time for him to experiment, err, and be corrected. It costs very little to teach a child how to speak — if he is normal.

Not so with writing. He who is learning to write does not have all the time at his disposal, is not dealing with an inherent learning propensity, and, consequently, cannot permit himself to experiment and err where he must. He will soon discover that time and money are a premium; and, to conserve these, errors must be avoided when at all possible. And how will he avoid these errors unless he knows what they are? And how will he know them unless he is pretaught? Do we not know that too many children enter high school without having grasped the bare basics of writing? This, then is the basis for my argument: we do not have the time nor the finance to teach writing as Moffett suggests. Besides, the fact that students fail to apply their learning is no excuse for not preteaching. Teachers are not to be faulted if pupils fail to apply what has been taught. It is more profitable that students, when writing, be made aware of the techniques of the art and not use them than to be forced to commit time-consuming and unnecessary errors, errors they would have eagerly avoided — had they known better.

But before presenting the details of my proposal, it might be well to analyze the causes so that the remedies to be put forth might be seen in a clearer light. I am convinced that parents' and teachers' inability and/or unwillingness to nurture their charges beyond the mere elementary stages of linguistic growth — both in the spoken and written areas — has resulted in the widespread language disabilities now in evidence. Parents and relatives do contribute, for the most part, to the young child's linguistic growth via their daily parlance; but this is done without plan — at random. The linguistic stimuli received by the young learner were picked up here and there, so to speak. But there was no concerted effort to teach the child. Now, as Moffett has noted, there was no need to do so — except that, as we all know, the child speaks what he hears and, too often he hears 'bad grammar.' Too, many of his generalizations are erroneous and, if not corrected, will be embedded in his linguistic repertoire. In too many instances this is precisely what happens. This fact lends much support to Moffett's post-teaching theory; however, even this vital phase of teaching has been ignored by these parents and relatives. As a consequence, the pupil finds himself, upon entry into elementary school, years behind many of his classmates. He has discovered, too late, that either his linguistic growth has been hopelessly stunted or has been allowed to proceed irrevocably along the path of improper language usage. Many of our reticent students who express themselves in grunts, groans, and "you know's" are the products of situations such as this. When this student is, at last, introduced to reading, monumental will be the task since, for all practical purposes, he will be learning a second language. Needless to point out that, as far as he is concerned, writing is out of the question.

Happily, there are those parents and relatives who do take time to provide their young with the needed preteaching and feedback. In these homes the learner travels the deductive-inductive road to linguistic mastery the details of which are too well known to repeat here. Suffice it that we note the deliberateness of this method. The child's success is no mere accident; it is the direct and happy result of intense and concerted planned preteaching, learning and feedback. In these homes it was assumed that the propensity to learn language is inherent, but that the propensity to learn it correctly is not. The child, then, can now avoid 'logical' errors as "runned," "sitted," "goed," and others from taking hold. These errors will not leave him unless driven away by planned systematic teaching which involves the techniques to which I have referred. But if this systematic method is vital at this stage, it is much more so at the following stages — reading and writing — to which I now turn.

Unlike the previously discussed student for whom learning to read is akin to the learning of a second language, this pupil's reading difficulties can be easily overcome — if someone would take the time to instruct him. But, alas, few parents or relatives bother to impart to their charges anything more than the bare essentials of reading. They forget or are ignorant of the fact that the initial stage of linguistic acquisition — speaking, that is — can be initiated and mastered, to a certain degree, with minimum planned tutorship. Not so this intermediate stage — the reading stage. No longer will a "running course" in language suffice, nor will the mere presence of linguistic stimuli; hence, the uselessness of the television set at this stage of the pupil's linguistic growth. Equally useless are the magazines, newspapers, and billboards; hence, the dire need for planned intervention by parents, relatives, and teachers. Unfortunately, neither tend to do much for the needy pupil and, as a consequence, this once promising student now finds himself in a situation similar to that of his counterpart from a less concerned home.

But even if these students, from both careful and careless homes, do manage to progress beyond the remedial and developmental stages of reading ability, what of the final, and most difficult, stage—writing? I am aware that there is often no clear-cut developmental nexus between learning to read and learning to write. It appears, though, that the former is normally perfected before the latter; in fact, mastery of the latter is heavily dependent upon prior perfection of the former. And it is common knowledge, or it should be, that he who cannot read well will never write well. Obviously then, appropriate instruction in reading and good reading habits are prime prerequisites to be fulfilled if excellence in writing is to be achieved. Parents, relatives, teachers, and school officials should be mindful of this; but, alas, many are not, or do not appear to be. And I am convinced that they are responsible, in part, for the host of high school and college students who, though they exhibit relatively high degree of speaking skills, read rather poorly and, consequently, write even more so — if they do at all. It would appear that much more teaching time, more effort, and more money would be spent in this endeavor since writing is not only the least likely of the communicative skills to be learned, the learning of which is highly dependent upon mastery in other areas — particularly reading — but is also the most important. In spite of all this, many teachers and schools — particularly at the secondary level — practice the laissez-faire doctrine — despite the obvious need to do otherwise. Sooner or later they and their charges are faced with the two diverged roads of pedagogical quandary: should the techniques of writing be taught or should the pupil be left alone to "develop his own style"? And, like Frost, neither pupil nor teacher can travel both roads. Too often, though, the teacher opts for the latter. I propose that we take the former — the one least travelled.

Let me preface the details of my proposal with quotations from two writers (one from the seventeenth century, the other from the twentieth) both of whom argue that reading not only maketh a critical mind but also a good writer:

> And now . . . will be the time to read with them those organic arts which enable men to discourse and write perspicuously, elegantly and according to the fitted style of lofty, mean, or lowly (John Milton, "Of Education").

Since Milton is no friend of many present-day English teachers, his advice is not likely to be taken seriously. But similar advice from the pen of one of our contemporaries might strike closer to home:

> For most college students, the best writing comes as a response to ideas presented in the work of the professionals — people who have deeply involved themselves in some aspect of human scene and who have conscientiously worked towards an effective presentation to others. In sharing an exploration with a good writer, the student often finds his own mind freed of stereotype and cliche and led into fresh areas of speculation. He is required to examine his own experience of the world and use it to overlap that of the writer's — either to conform, to integrate, or to challenge. Along the way he may also discover devices for better structuring and developing his own writing. Reading and writing then becomes part of an organic process (Jack S. Romine, *Mastering College English*, p. 141).

Both Milton and Romine have put before us alternatives worthy of consideration. It is indeed imperative that the pupil be made aware, via analytical perusal of works written by fine authors, of the varieties of styles and their uses before he or she can embark on the development of his own style. And Moffett would concur in this but would certainly take issue with James Ney who has argued that students be pretaught the fundamentals of rhetoric and style *prior* to the study of the written works:

> In the first place . . . the student should be made aware of the types of patterns in the structure and vocabulary of the written language. To do this the teacher will have to acquaint his pupils with a minimum of grammatical analysis. For this exercise, one of the many competing models of grammatical analysis will have to be chosen. Almost any one can be used if it provides an accurate analysis without conveying misinformation. Through the use of such a model, the student should be made to understand the structure of the sentences which are selected as examples, and which are taken from the readings in the course. . . . The student must practice these structures . . . until [they] become an easily produceable part of his linguistic repertoire. The student writer needs this type of practice because in writing . . . the language should flow easily and readily so that the substance of expression, the ideas, might receive full attention. As in mastering a foreign language, the degree of fluency increases in direct proportion to the amount of effective practice expended . . . ("On Not Practicing Errors" in *Teaching Freshman Composition*, Gary Tate and Edward Corbett, eds., pp. 246-47).

It is this pedagogical model which would prove most beneficial to students and economical for the school system. Preteaching is its essence. I do not believe that students should be plunged headlong into the task and be allowed to commit errors where they may. Committing errors might be a part of learning, but is certainly not an indispensible part. Pupils can learn and not err; however, if they must, then erring should be reduced as much as possible. Moffett argues as if the more errors students commit the merrier.

All high schools should begin, with the most deliberate speed, programs designed to engage pupils in critical reading (for those who cannot do so) and writing. These programs should be undertaken with the following in mind: that writing can be taught, and that to write well students must be able to use rhetorical techniques properly. But — and this is vital — we must also admit that we have failed to meet our responsibility, and cease our buckpassing. We need to admit that students, indeed, cannot write and that we are responsible. In direct challenge to those who disagree I propose that we assume ignorance on the students' part and, therefore, practice preventive teaching of writing. This will save time, effort, money, and pains.

There has been much ado about why Johnny cannot write. Curiously enough, this has given rise to more questions than answers, and has sparked nationwide debates which have given off more heat than light. But the answer is simple: Johnny cannot write simply because too many English teachers, if we deserve to be called by that name, have assumed that, in spite of their ignorance of writing fundamentals, students can write well; hence, there is no need to teach the skill. Others have assumed that writing cannot be taught. Then there are those who have assumed students' inherent knowledge of writing fundamentals and, thus, have taught in such a manner which has led students to do little more than "practice errors," as James Ney has noted. If students were allowed to speak they would tell us two things: (1) that they have no idea what writing is all about — let alone do it well, and (2) that we should teach them how to do it — now.

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A Composition

In *A Conceptual Theory of Rhetoric*, Frank D'Angelo suggests that the structure of an essay is intimately related to the process of invention:

> . . . in the inventive process, the writer begins with a mental image or plan of the discourse which is to be produced. This image (which is extrinsic to the discourse and represents the efficient cause) corresponds roughly to the order of the discourse itself (which is intrinsic and represents the formal or material cause).

Structural paradigms can indeed be heuristic devices, forms into which subject matters can be poured like Jell-o. Beginning with D'Angelo's suggestion, I have constructed a paradigm that represents, I believe, the structure of a significant number of essays in the field of composition and composition theory. So pervasive is this pattern that it can be used as a powerful heuristic implement, capable of generating article after publishable article, some of which may even add to our hoard of rhetorical knowledge. All the writer in need of a promotion has to do is plug some previously unconsidered pragmatic, syntactic, or semantic discourse feature into the title, and the paradigm — given a good shake — does all the rest. My composition paradigm, like the classical oration, is divided into six parts, almost.

The first part uncovers a problem no one has seen fit to bother with before, blames someone for it, and declares a crisis. I call this part the *lamentatio*.

The *lamentatio* is followed by the *invocatio*, in which the author calls upon divine authorities for wisdom, guidance, documentation, and footnotes.

Then follows a lengthy part in which the author trumps up various scratchings of empirical evidence to prove what Gulliver called "the thing which was not." I call this part the *exaggeratio*.

It is followed by the most important part of the discourse, the *exploitatio*, in which the writer describes the problems or lists the questions that will keep researchers busy for at least forty years.

The *exploitatio* is followed by the *atrophicatio*, which ends the article by

Paradigm: "Once More into the Breach, Dear Friends"

expressing the hope that not only will the author revolutionize pedagogy and save the world, but perhaps even get tenure.

If this paradigm does not seem familiar, perhaps an article derived entirely from a close study of its principles will jar the ribs of memory:

THE PERIOD, RECONSIDERED

For too long, our students in the writing classroom have been led to believe that the chief, indeed the only, function of the period is to terminate sentences. Endless pedagogies have been erected upon this largely unexamined assumption. The Bakers, Guths, and McCrimmons of this world have grown fat on sixth and seventh editions of textbooks that preach the necessity of terminally endstopping all sentential units, despite the fact that no empirical research has yet been presented to support their dicta. All of us blithely assume that periods do indeed terminate sentential units. But just what are the facts?

Mina Shaughnessy, in her book *Errors and Expectations*, must say somewhere that we ought to reconsider how we teach the period. And no doubt, Janet Emig, James Kinneavy, and Edward P.J. Corbett would agree.

If we examine the practice of professional writers in this matter, we discover some facts upsetting to rigid and conventional notions of terminal punctuation. The author of *Beowulf*, and his or her copyist — all of them, no doubt, professional writers of some stature in their *dryht-sele* — virtually ignore punctuation in the narrative work that is regarded by some as a classic of our literature. Similarly, in our own era, James Joyce, the author of several very thick books, sometimes writes page after page of sentences unimpeded by sentential punctuational terminuses. If the practice of professional writers suggests that the placement of what are traditionally called periods is not so rigidly conventionalized as the antiquated paradigms of the textbooks indicate, then perhaps what we need is a new model for the periodizing process.

I would suggest that one way of freeing up our students' minds from the restrictions and constrictions that the requirement of imposing constant punctuational terminuses on sentential units places on them is to invent a more flexible pedagogical structure in which we treat the period as a floating discourse unit capable of generating multiple psychological signals, depending upon its placement within sentential and paragraph modules. For too long we have regarded the period as an end marker, a termination, a goal line, a *requiescat in pace*. But as I demonstrated in my dissertation, *A Survey of Literary Periods, from Beowulf to Joyce* (North by Northwest State University, 1979), more than 92.63% of all periods are followed by subsequent sentential units. Thus we can argue that, far from terminating discourse, periods actually stimulate it. In most cases, periods function to tell a reader that more writing is to be expected! From this new perspective, sentences become complex continuum of interrelated and recursive ideas conjoined by approving, positive, reinforcing, and affirming signals, rather than a series of linear, lurching phrases staccatoly decapitated by authoritarian specks.

Now, at last, we see the potential that resides not only in terminal periods and initial periods, but in medial periods as well. For the existence of medial periods, we can point to the evidence of thousands of language users, some of them our own students, who have resisted the narrow rules of pedagogues to place their periods anywhere they damn well please. What we have heretofore described as sentence fragments are nothing more than what our new pedagogy would describe as medially punctuated sentential units. Fragments have ceased to exist!

I have only scratched the surface of the possibilities for reassessing the period. Much work remains to be done. For one thing, we need a new terminology to describe the multiple facets of the period. I would suggest that hereafter we describe periods by their function and placement. To our students, the period will be known as simply an individuated diacritical interpolating object (an IDIO, to coin a useful acronym). Periods that occur at the beginning of sentences, that is, opening IDIO's can be designated IDIO-O's, medial IDIO's become IDIO-M's, and on those rare occasions when periods actually do terminate a sentence, we have an IDIO-T. Working from this more precise vocabulary, we can begin asking the questions that only careful empirical research funded by massive government grants can answer:

What distinguishes an IDIO-O from an IDIO-M?

What discourse features characterize IDIO-Tic sentential units?

What is the relationship between composing and periodizing?

What is the relationship between periodizing and breathing?

Do hiccups generate unnecessary punctuation?

We need raw data and research on the phonological, epistemological, pathological, and pseudological effects of IDIO-T's on our students. And surely there's government money, articles, and even tenure out there for major inquiries into the suggestive relationship between IDIO's and capital letters. And we need to explore the possibilities of IDIO-Tic heuristics and permaneutics. And we need to spend less time examining the products of idiotization and more time on the process.

It is not too much to claim that once we recognize the fundamental role IDIO's play in discourse theory, we will revolutionize our pedagogy and produce students more confident in what they write, more critical of the world around them, and more capable of making the rhetorical decisions that will mark them as mature writers. Freed from the constrictions of old thinking and old ways, they will come to know the difference between an IDIO-M and an IDIO-T, and for that we can take full credit.

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